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# AMENDS

*American Middle Eastern Network for Dialogue at Stanford*



## Proceedings of the 2013 Summit







*Proceedings of the 2013 Annual Summit of the American Middle Eastern Network for Dialogue at Stanford, 13-17 April 2013, Stanford University, United States of America.*

These written proceedings are meant to summarize discussions held at the 2013 AMENDS Summit; as such, statements should not be attributed to specific delegates or presenters but rather the Summit as a whole. To cite this document:

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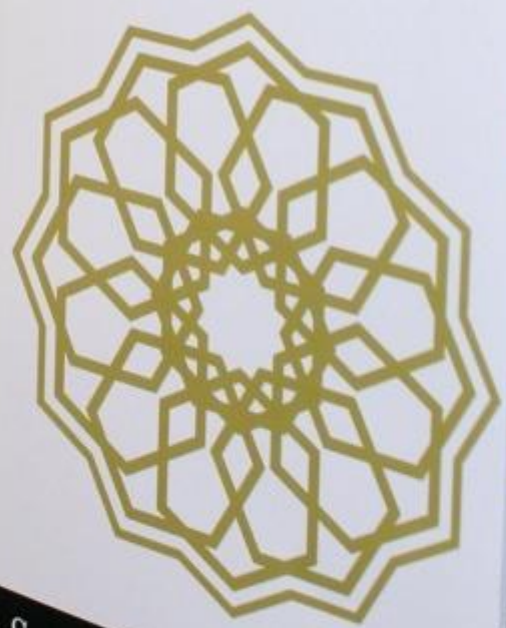
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# AMENDS

*American Middle Eastern Network for Dialogue at Stanford*



*Second Annual Summit*  
April 13 – 17, 2014  
Stanford University



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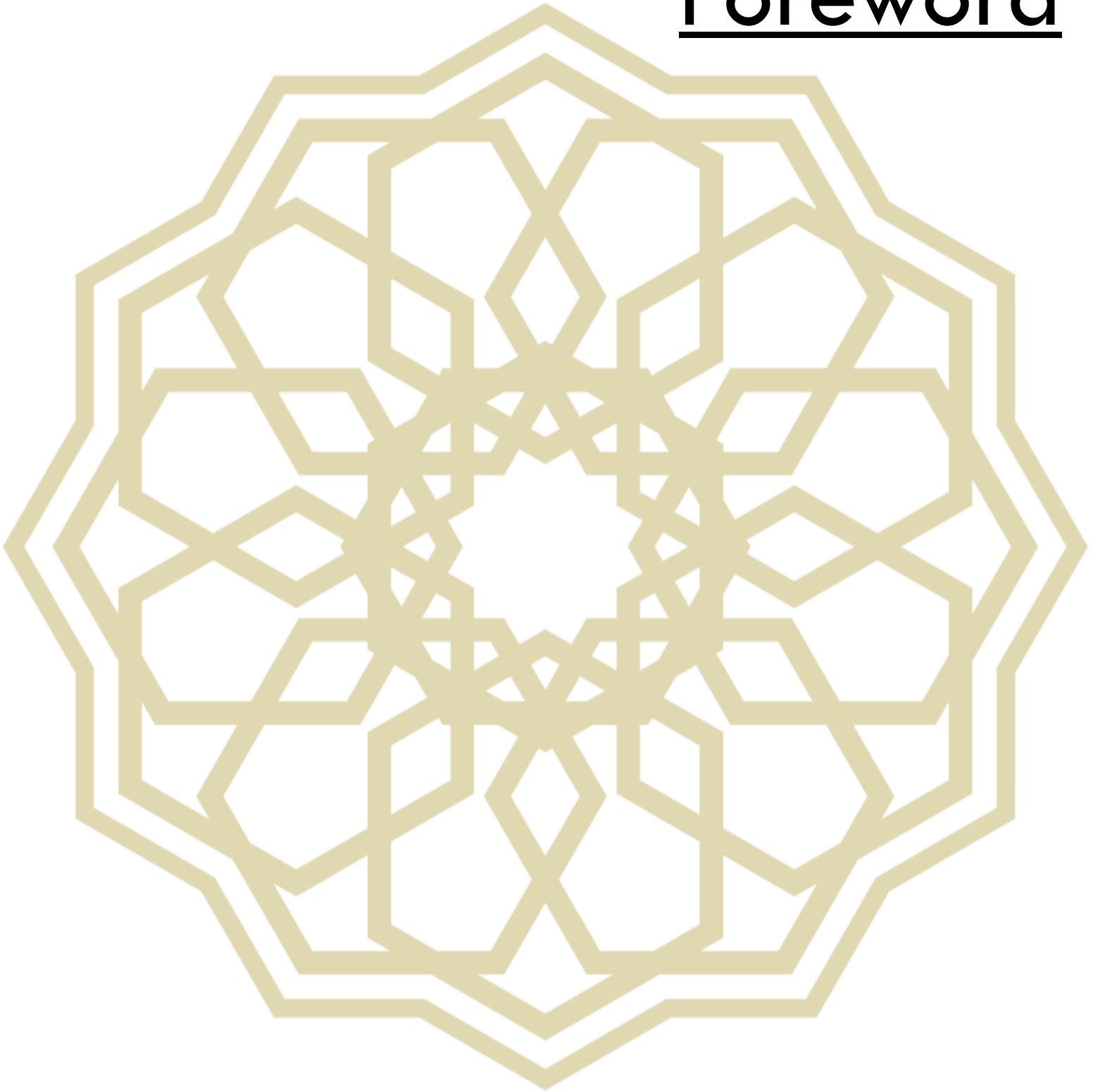
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# Foreword



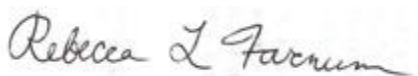
In February of 2011, as protests were erupting across North Africa and the Middle East, two Stanford undergraduates met at a coffee shop. They had been born and raised in Bahrain and Chicago respectively. A conversation ensued about the power of youth leaders to create positive social, political, and economic change; the necessity of sharing their ideas and experiences with the world; and the profound potential for collaboration and improved understanding between the Middle East, North Africa, and the United States.

Given the 2011 uprisings and the West's increased interest in youth activism in the region, Khaled Alshawi and Elliot Stoller found willing professors and funders for a dialogue platform meant to bring Middle Eastern and American change agents together. And so a simple coffee shop conversation became AMENDS, the American and Middle Eastern Network for Dialogue at Stanford. Two students became twenty, and what had only been a dream of knowing more about what was happening on the ground in the Middle East and North Africa became an Annual Summit of Delegates chosen for their potential to affect real change in the region on the basis of ongoing projects they lead around a variety of social, economic, environmental, and political issues.

In April 2013, after a rigorous application process that narrowed some three hundred applications to just over thirty, a series of pre-conference calls helping to introduce Delegates to each other and the time, and a number of visa and transportation headaches, the Second Annual Summit of the American and Middle Eastern Network for Dialogue at Stanford took place. AMENDS Delegates engaged in five days of dialogue with each other and participated in a series of workshops on communication, design, and funding. They met with respected professors and entrepreneurs. The Summit culminated in a series of TED™-like talks in which delegates shared their initiatives with each other and an audience invited from across Stanford and the Valley.

I have been phenomenally blessed to get to know the AMENDS Executive Team and my fellow Delegates. They are incredible people doing absolutely amazing things. These pages only begin to shed light on the insights, inspirations and encouragement that was found April 13-17, 2013, in Palo Alto. If only every week could be spent in an atmosphere as joyous, hopeful, and respectful as can be found at AMENDS, the world would be well past many of today's most pressing problems.

These "Proceedings" document five amazing days as best as can be done in writing. They were written as a salute to the hundreds of young people working in the Middle East and North Africa to make a better tomorrow, and a better today. They were also written as an admonishment to all of us to delve deeper, to see past the headlines, and to engage in true dialogue around tough issues that we often avoid for the sake of comfort.

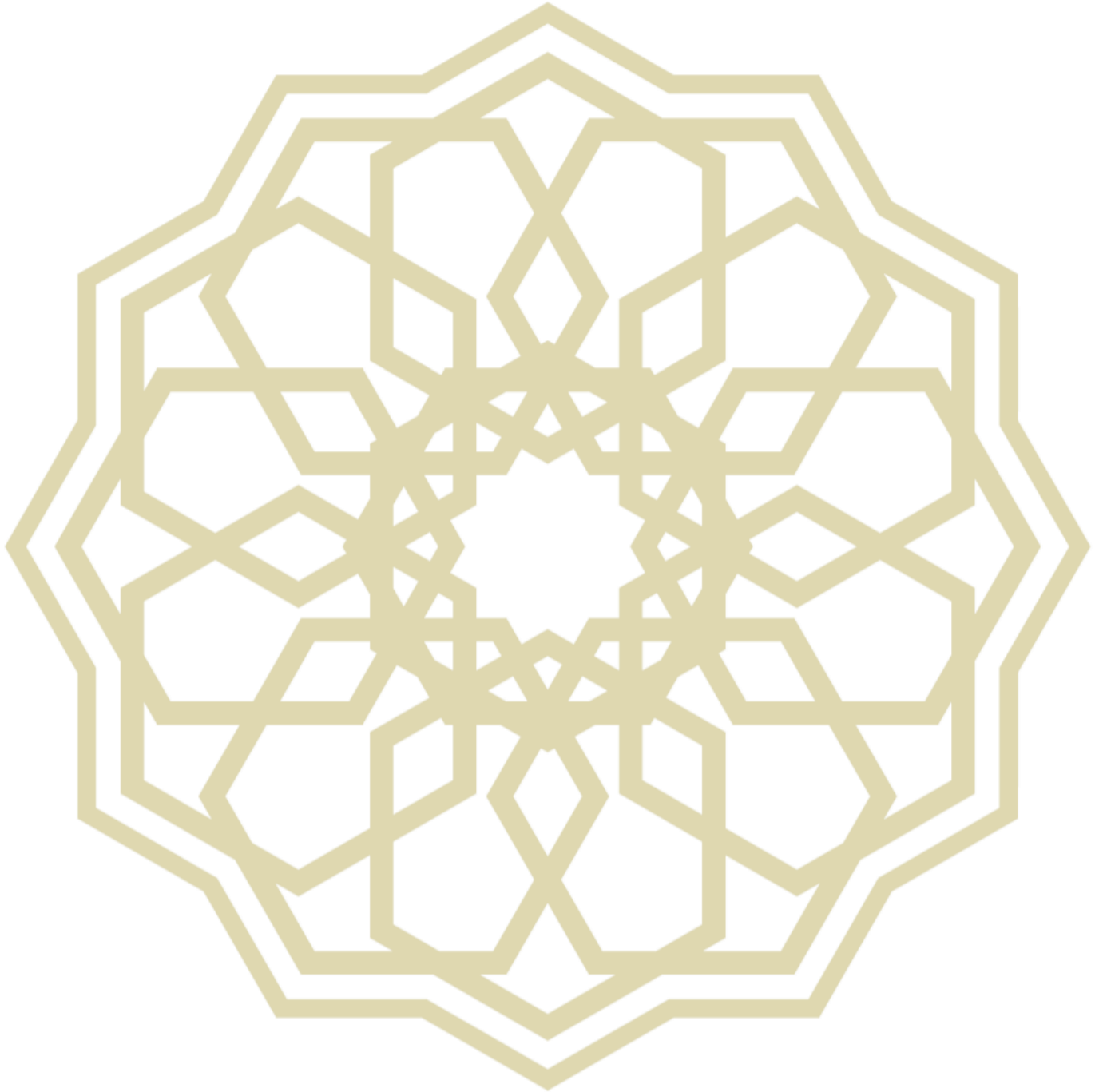
A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rebecca L Farnum". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping underline.







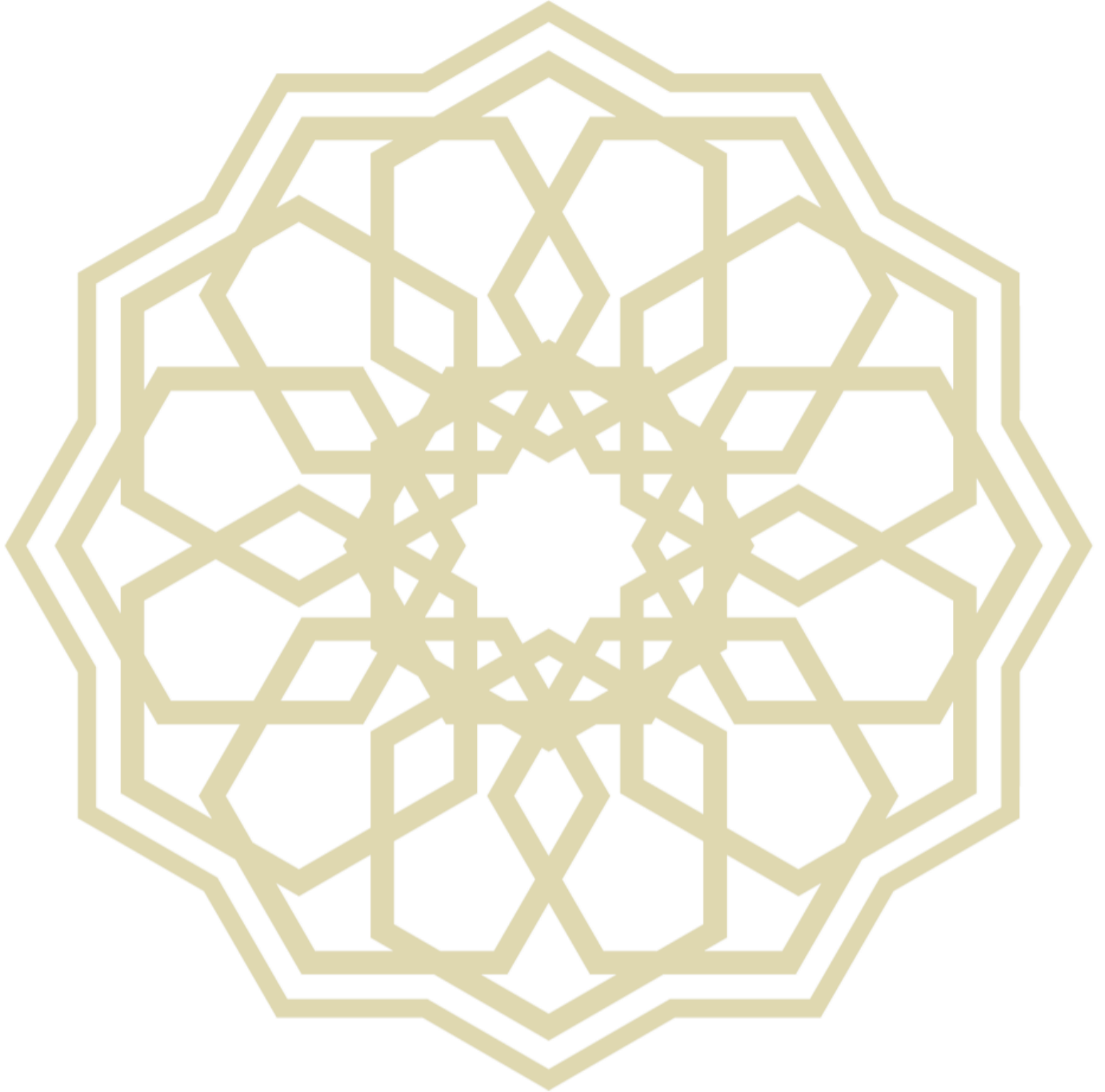
# Part 1



# Workshops & Discussions



# Chapter 1



## Speakers



AMENDS  
American Middle Eastern Network for  
Dialogue at Stanford

Annual Summit  
Stanford University

April 13-17, 2013



## Speakers | Opening Ceremony



The 2013 Annual Summit of the American Middle Eastern Network for Dialogue at Stanford convened formally at noon on Saturday April 13 in a Private Opening Ceremony and Reception for the 2013 AMENDS Delegates, Executive Team, and Board of Advisors.

AMENDS Co-Founders Khaled Alshawi and Elliot Stoller opened the Summit by welcoming delegates to Stanford and explaining the program's history and vision. Khaled then

introduced Prince Moulay Hicham ben Abdallah, who gave an Honorary Opening Speech.

Prince Moulay Hicham's comments focused on the need for critical leadership in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly during this period of transition following the revolutions of 2011 and beyond. He challenged delegates to use the Summit as a springboard for the kind of dialogue and action needed in the region.

Luncheon discussions centered around delegates' initiatives, the use of the term "Arab Spring", and what attendees hoped to get out of the week.



### Speaker Biography

Prince Moulay Hicham is currently a Visiting Researcher at the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at Stanford University, and serves on the Advisory Board of the University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, as well as the Board of Advisors for AMENDS. He is the grandson of the late King Mohammed V, the father of the modern, independent nation of Morocco. He has written extensively on the politics of transition from authoritarianism to democracy and related subjects pertaining to the Arab world in journals such as *Le Monde*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Politique Internationale*, and *Al-Hyat*. He has also lectured in numerous universities and think tanks in North America and Europe. His work for the advancement of peace and conflict resolution has brought him to Kosovo as a special Assistant to Bernard Kouchner, and to Nigeria and Palestine as an election observer with the Carter Center. He is also an entrepreneur with interests in agriculture, real estate, and renewable energies. His company, Al Tayyar Energy, has a number of clean energy projects in Asia and Europe. His latest project is the development of an eco-city in Morocco.

## Speakers | *Dr. Lina Khatib*

Saturday afternoon, delegates joined Dr. Lina Khatib in a moderated discussion around issues of leadership, responsibility, and initiative in the Middle East and North Africa.

Dr. Khatib opened by observing that many people in the Middle East and North Africa have grown up with a negative perception of not only their government, but also leadership in general. Leadership is often seen as a doorway to exploitation. Because of this, empowerment programs that are framed by the language of leadership rarely succeed, as they are fraught with negative connotations. AMENDS Delegates then contributed their own experiences with leadership and government in the region.



As discussion progressed, several themes became prominent:

- People in the Middle East and North Africa must somehow manage to balance taking responsibility and becoming stakeholders with avoiding self-blaming and victimization.
- MENA-region activists, initiatives, and movements must balance expectations with realities. Movements' leaders need to be trained in expectation management.
- Patronage, bribery, and other forms of corruption continue to be salient issues. Initiatives in the region struggle to do their work while refusing to engage in corrupt activities.
- Making issues like “power” and “leadership” a good thing in the eyes of MENA youth could go a long way in helping address many of these issues.

### **Speaker Biography**



Lina Khatib is a Program Manager at the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at Stanford University, managing the Program on Arab Reform and Democracy. She joined Stanford University from the University of London where she was an Associate Professor. Her research is firmly interdisciplinary and focuses on the intersections of politics, media, and social factors in relation to the politics of the Middle East. She is also a consultant on Middle East politics and media and has published widely on topics such as new media and Islamism, US public diplomacy towards the Middle East, and political media and conflict in the Arab world, as well as on the political dynamics in Lebanon and Iran. She has an active interest in the link between track two dialogue and democratization policy. She is also a Research Associate at SOAS, University of London, and, from 2010-2012, a Research Fellow at the USC Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School.

## Speakers | Professor Larry Diamond

Sunday afternoon, Professor Larry Diamond spoke to AMENDS Delegates on “Assessing the Arab Spring: Prospects for Democracy in the Middle East.” It is a trending topic; everyone wants to understand the Arab Spring, the possibilities for democratic movements in the Arab world, and what needs to happen for the aspirations of so many to be realized. The uprisings of 2011 and beyond certainly indicate that the Arab people are valuing popular sovereignty. But wanting a democratic government and getting one are two different things.



One of the core issues in transitional situations is overcoming the phenomenon of political polarizations and deep divisions in society between political camps that seem to be mutually incompatible. Usually, these camps are the political regime and the opposition. Even when a regime has collapsed, the opposition is rarely unified around a singular vision of the future. These competing forces are often the greatest threat to transition.

The quest for mutual security may help alleviate this threat. Credible agreements between competing political groups are needed, such that all political groups have confidence that the other parties will not eliminate them, throw them in jail, etc. Winner take all outcomes are almost always counter to achieving sustainable democracies.

Delegates' discussions with Professor Diamond engaged questions around democratic constitutions, whether a democratic government or a democratic people comes first, the role of media in democratizing the Middle East, and the role of external actors in transitions and ongoing movements.

### Speaker Biography

Professor Larry Diamond is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, where he also directs the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law. He is the founding co-editor of the *Journal of Democracy* and also serves as Senior Consultant (and previously was co-director) at the International Forum for Democratic Studies of the National Endowment for Democracy.

During 2002-3, he served as a consultant to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and was a contributing author of its report *Foreign Aid in the National Interest*. He has also advised and lectured to the World Bank, the United Nations, the State Department, and other governmental and nongovernmental agencies dealing with governance and development. His latest book, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* (Times Books, 2008), explores the sources of global democratic progress and stress and the prospects for future democratic expansion.





## Speakers | *Former Secretary of Defense William Perry*

Just before the first round of AMENDS Talks, AMENDS Delegates and Summit visitors were privileged to hear from the 19<sup>th</sup> Secretary of Defense for the United States.

William Perry was once responsible for the US' weapon systems acquisition. Now, he is work to reduce and eliminate the world's supply of nuclear weapons.

AMENDS attendees heard Former Secretary Perry's story of living through World War 2, joining the Army Corps of Engineers, and seeing the ruins of Hiroshima. During his doctoral and post-doc work in electronic warfare, Perry saw humanity's ability to destroy increase by a factor of one million in just a few short years.

When consulted during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Perry saw just how close the Earth came to being destroyed. And he realized that nuclear war could happen from mere miscalculations and misinterpretations.



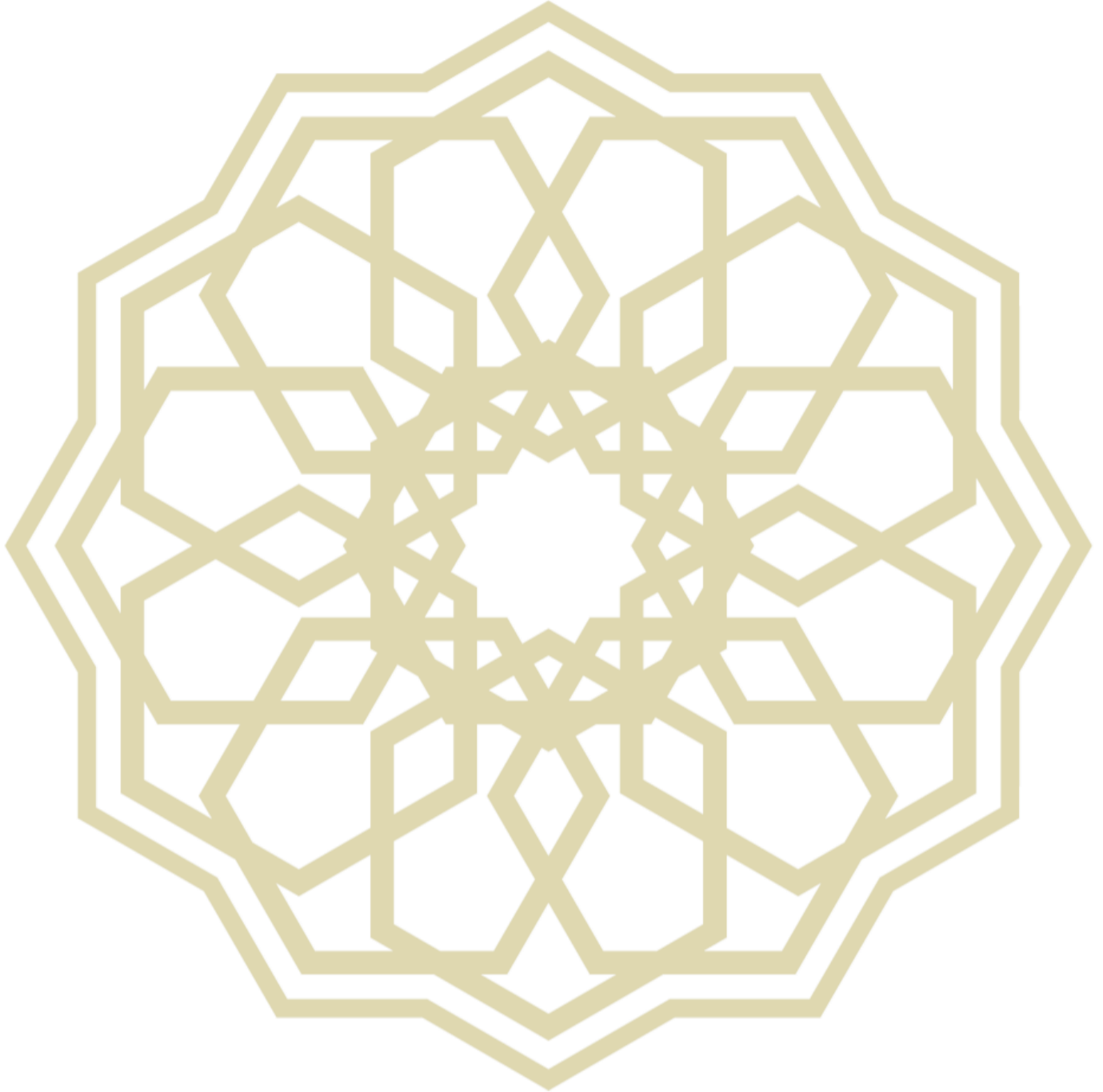
Today, there is limited action on reducing the danger from nuclear weapons. Most Americans think the danger ended with the Cold War. The reality is that many stockpiles still exist, and the materials are not regulated well enough. Former Secretary Perry believes that if citizens do not understand the dangers, they are unlikely to take action. And so he is working to educate America and the world on the continuing danger and advise a path ahead.

During the question and answer session, Former Secretary Perry fielded questions about the best action for people to take; the role of the media, the United Nations, and other institutions; how nuclear weapons and more conventional bombs are related; and the role of the United States in global weapons distribution. He encourages everyone to get in contact with their representatives or government and put pressure on policymakers to take action.

### **Speaker Biography**

William Perry is the Michael and Barbara Berberian Professor (emeritus) at Stanford University. He is a senior fellow at FSI and serves as co-director of the Nuclear Risk Reduction initiative and the Preventive Defense Project. He is an expert in U.S. foreign policy, national security and arms control. He was the co-director of CISAC from 1988 to 1993, during which time he was also a professor (half time) at Stanford. He was a part-time lecturer in the Department of Mathematics at Santa Clara University from 1971 to 1977. Perry was the 19th Secretary of Defense for the United States, serving from February 1994 to January 1997. Dr. Perry currently serves on the Defense Policy Board (DPB) and the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board (SEAB).

# Chapter 2



## Workshops





## Workshops | *Institute of Design*

Sunday morning, AMENDS Delegates fought jet lag with an energizing workshop facilitated by Nadia Roumani from the Stanford Institute of Design, lovingly nicknamed the “d.school.” Delegates practiced three skills:



*Product Design.* AMENDS Delegates paired up and experienced a fast-paced session on researching, brainstorming, and prototyping a product. They first interviewed each their partners about the needs they have for a particular product. After brainstorming some possible solutions and discussing a few starting ideas with their partner, delegates then got their hands dirty constructing models: out of pipe cleaners, construction paper, tin foil, buttons...

*Deep Dive Interview.* After their skim-the-surface creations, AMENDS Delegates got some practice going deeper through a group interview with a d.school team member. Delegates practiced designing and asking questions, note taking during interviews, and probing for information while respecting privacy and sensitive topics.



*Process Design Flow.* After diving deep, AMENDS Delegates split into groups of 4-6 and experienced the process design flow of identifying a client’s underlying needs and motivations, creating a project to suit the client’s needs, and producing a prototype to get feedback. Teams built needs statements for the d.school member, brainstormed multiple solutions, and discussed the top few with her.

Over an informal lunch, AMENDS Delegates discussed how the process of design flow could be applied to their initiatives.

### **About the d.school**

The d.school is a hub for innovators at Stanford. Students and faculty in engineering, medicine, business, law, the humanities, sciences, and education find their way here to take on the world’s messy problems together. Human values are at the heart of our collaborative approach. We focus on creating spectacularly transformative learning experiences. Along the way, our students develop a process for producing creative solutions to even the most complex challenges they tackle. This is the core of what we do.



## Workshops | *Mastery in Communication Initiative*

Sunday evening, AMENDS Delegates spent focused time preparing for their AMENDS Talks. Stanford MBA students Omer Rabin and Jessica Renier from the Mastery in Communication Initiative gave a presentation on public speaking, providing Delegates with tips for standing and moving, using gestures and hand motions appropriately, and dealing with nerves.



Omer and Jessica worked with Delegates on two main channels: their message and their delivery. The message of a presentation is important, but the delivery of the presentation is vital to making sure the audience understands and appreciates the message. Delegates were advised that if they aimed at everything, they would miss everything. Instead, they should focus on one thing, and the other important issues would come out in the way they talked about and presented that one thing. Lastly, Omer and Jessica suggested that a talk should always use a simple one three-fold structure: Tell

the audience what you're going to tell them; tell them; and tell them what you told them while calling them to action. Delegates were reminded that people are listening to them for a reason and encouraged to make it as easy as possible for the audience to know what Delegates want them to!

Delegates then split into small groups with volunteers from the Graduate School of Business for individualized help. AMENDS Delegates gave a dress rehearsal of their talk and received focused feedback.

### **About the Mastery in Communication Initiative at the Stanford GSB**

The Mastery in Communication Initiative promotes communication excellence by providing communication courses, coaching, and student advising. Our mission is to help students at all levels of communication competence achieve mastery in communication. We work with not only with MBA students but also with students in the Sloan Master's Program and PhD candidates; space in our classes and workshops is made available to other graduate students at Stanford when possible.







After the first day of AMENDS Talks, reenergized Delegates joined the AMENDS Executive Team and several guests in a Networking Dinner. Delegates discussed their initiatives with former American Ambassador to Morocco Thomas T. Riley, American television personality Mary Hart, Stanford University professors and researchers, Silicon Valley leaders, AMENDS supporters, and activists from the region. The evening brought insights and new partnership possibilities to many of the Delegates.



## Workshops | *TechWadi Fundraising*

Several mentors from TechWadi joined AMENDS Delegates on Tuesday morning to discuss fundraising and social entrepreneurship. Ossama Hassenein, Chairman of Board at TechWadi; Salim Jabr, Member at Sand Hill Angels; Mona Defrawi, CEO of Equidity; and Dr. Bruce Bauer, Co-Founder of Newbury Ventures discussed venture capital, start-ups, entrepreneurship, technology, and money management. The morning's advice included:

Social activists and entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa should consider angel investors and crowd funding as sources of capital. These sources of funds are usually in smaller amounts, but they provide a greater number of investments and can be more accessible. Whether going for these more informal funds or larger, competitive funds through businesses and strategic investments, people should remember that investors select based on the team as much as the issue. As an individual or team, are you showing that you have the passion, leadership, and character necessary to meet the challenges you will face and be successful in your chosen field?

When approaching investors, it's important to highlight that you are meeting an unmet need, providing a solution for an issue that needs to be solved. You also want to highlight how your technology, product, or method is different than alternatives and your competitors. Pitches for funds should also address how scalable a business or activism model is and why it's the right time to take action on this particular issue or product.

Your team should only raise as much money as is necessary to get to the next step. Every time you reach a significant point or goal in the business or activist plan, your group gains value and fundraising becomes easier.



Throughout the Summit, several conversations raised the issue of the negative connotations of failure in the Middle East and North Africa and how this cultural bias can be an impediment to entrepreneurship. Delegates were advised to reframe failure, believing that "There is no failure, only pivoting."

### **About TechWadi**

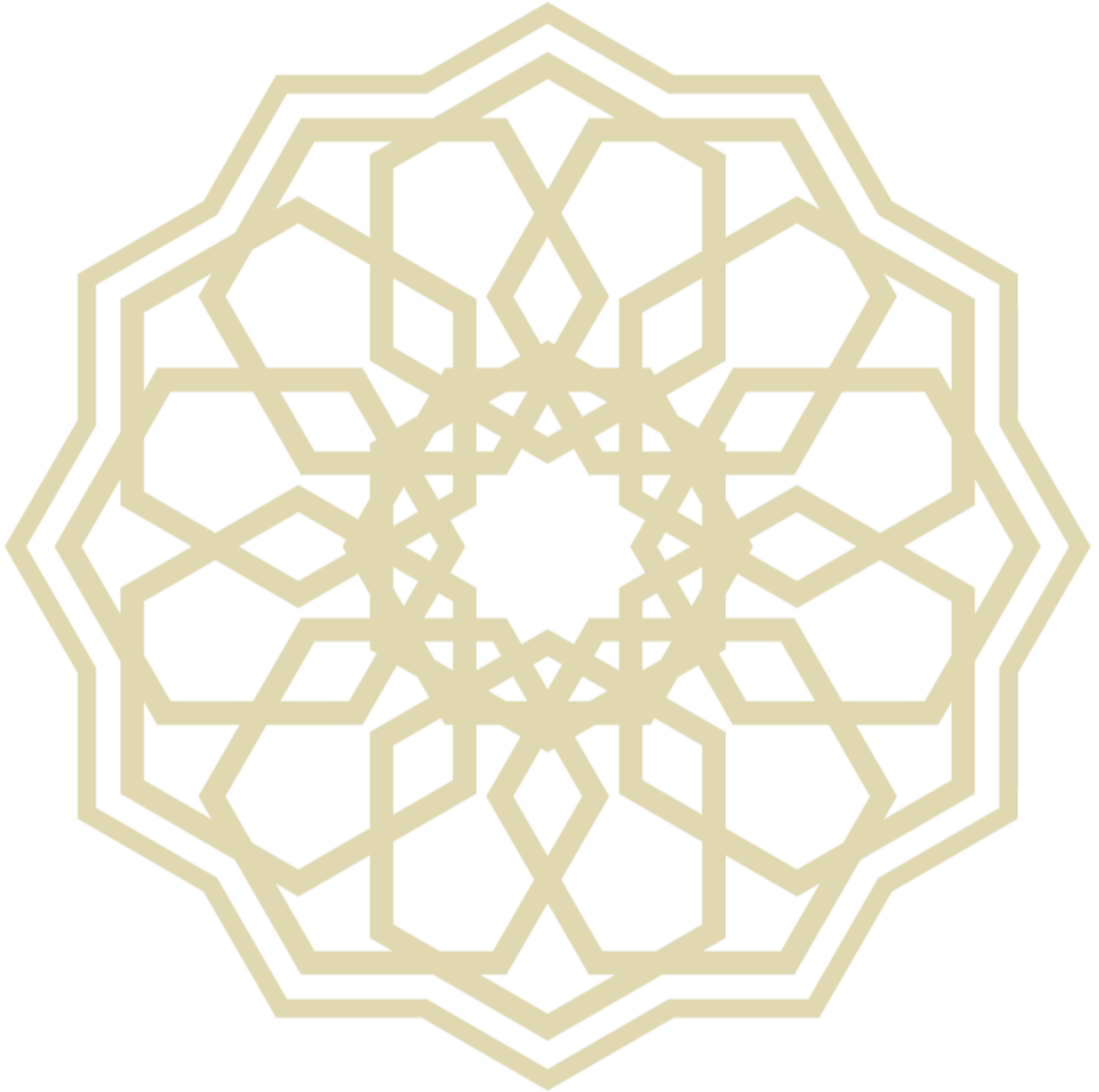
TechWadi is the leading non-profit organization building bridges between Silicon Valley and the Arab world. From its beginnings as the community of top Arab American technology professionals in Silicon Valley, TechWadi has evolved into a powerful platform for collaboration – with members and events spanning across the world.

In Silicon Valley, TechWadi brings together technology movers and shakers through conferences, networking events, workshops, and mentorship programs. In the MENA region, TechWadi works with leading regional and international organizations to empower high impact entrepreneurs and help build a sustainable infrastructure to help entrepreneurship thrive and succeed.





## Part 2



AMENDS Talks



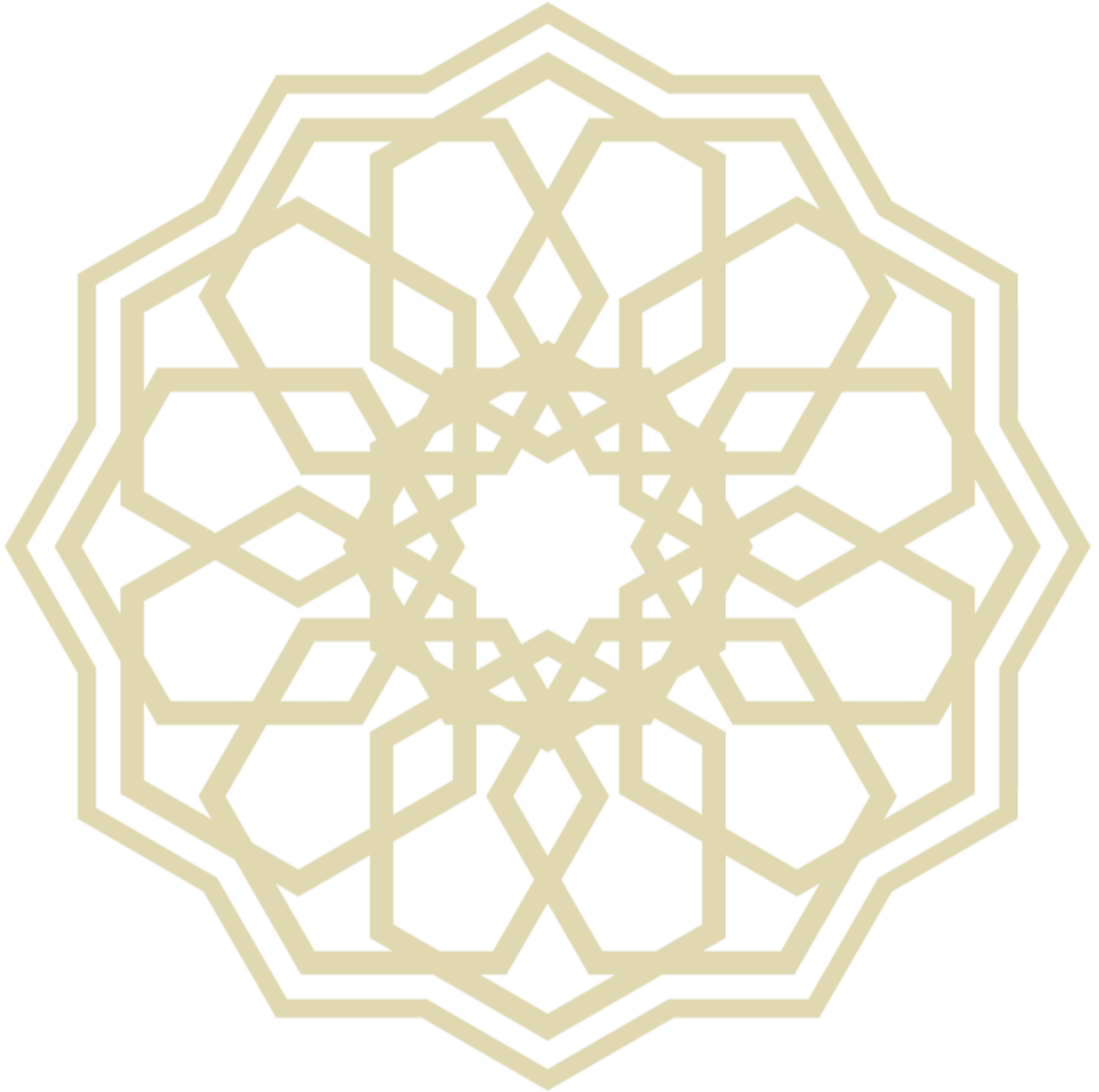


# AMENDS

American Middle Eastern Network for  
Dialogue at Stanford



# Chapter 3



## Capacity Building

Adi Gigi

AMENDS

American Middle Eastern Network  
Dialogue at Stanford

*The Gifted*



Adi Gigi's father made *Aliyah* when he was four, moving from Morocco to Israel. He grew up in a society of immigrants in a young country still working to define its identity. He began school in the Israeli system and was a very bright man, but the system was not able to recognize that. Like many other immigrant families, his went through economic struggles, forcing him to drop out of school. Mr. Gigi was unable to graduate from high school, and this perceived failure greatly impacted the rest of his life.

Adi wants to prevent the next generation of immigrants from feeling that same sense of failure. While doing some work in the education sector when she was seventeen, Adi saw that not much had changed. Gifted kids, especially from immigrant communities, were not receiving the proper attention. Israel's gifted and talented educational system is strong, but it's acceptance test is culturally biased. Because of this, more and more children like Adi's father slip through the cracks of the system each year.

To help prevent this, Adi created a program that identifies gifted children from immigrant communities at an early age and works with them to prepare for the national acceptance test. The initiative very purposefully works to get more immigrant children into the existing national gifted education program rather than creating an alternative for immigrant children, believing that "separate but equal" programs would not achieve the same goals of bridging gaps between communities.

Adi believes that self-confidence is the key for leadership and leadership will break the cycle of poverty so common in Israeli immigrant communities. Her program focuses on gifted individuals from a very early age, working to get children the support they need before the gap grows too wide to be bridged early. The program works with underprivileged children who show great potential to bring them above the average, believing this will help further true equality between all communities in Israel. The program focuses particularly on girls, who often suffer most from social expectations and stereotypes.

Several years later, it is clear that the initiative is helping to close cycles of inequality in Israeli immigrant communities. Adi is now working to expand the program to other sectors of the country.

For Adi, "my father's story was my fuel." She encourages all of us to "Find that one thing that is your fuel, that burns inside of you and forces you to take action. Find that one thing and make the world a better place to live in."





Ala Oueslati

*Project NASH*





Ala Oueslati is a student from Tunisia, where he studies business and languages. But Ala's business sense and language skills do not stay put in the classroom.

Two years ago, he founded the NASH (Nurture, Love, Feel, and Dress) initiative to help make sure people in Tunis had safe water, food, and clothing. Very quickly, Ala realized he wanted to do more than provide occasional handouts to people in need; instead, he wanted to make sure NASH could make a lasting impact in their lives. And so he decided to redirect the initiative to work with the twenty percent of Tunisia's population who are illiterate. NASH now focuses on encouraging people, no matter how old, to pursue education and to learn foreign languages.

The program has twenty-eight volunteer teachers who give group courses and provide individual instruction in Modern Standard Arabic for elderly illiterate people. The program also provides instruction in seven foreign languages (Tamazight, English, French, Spanish, Russian, Hebrew, and Mandarin) for students with disabilities and those who wish to learn a second language. As part of NASH's vision to help encourage tolerance, peace, love, and respect, instructors also offer courses in Esperanto. Esperanto is a constructed auxiliary language that does not belong to any one people, religion, or nation. It is meant to be the easiest language in the world to learn and serve as a neutral form of communication between people from different groups. Ala is an official member of UEA (Universala Esperanto-Asocio), the largest international organization for Esperanto speakers. He is currently working to launch a UEA office in Tunis promoting the language's use.

Beyond working with individuals on the ground, NASH maintains partnerships with a variety of local universities, the Tunisian Ministry of Culture, and foreign companies and investors. Through these partnerships, they have conducted research on language use and literacy in the country and have opened the door for discussions about the role of diversity in political, social, and cultural arenas, drawing attention to the minority ethnicities, religions, and languages that exist in Tunisia. They also work to introduce foreign investors to the Tunisian market through commercial studies, translation, and business offers, helping to increase local employment.

Ala writes about NASH, Esperanto, and other pressing social issues in *Espacio Abierto*, the Cervantes Institute newspaper published by the Instituto Cervantes Túnez.

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[Ala Eddine Oueslati](#)



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[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkAl0iFc8e0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkAl0iFc8e0)





# Arez Hussen



## *Iraqi Journalism*

On the flight home from the Iraqi Young Leadership Exchange Program in Arizona in 2009, another participant repeatedly apologized to Arez Hussen for the stereotypes he had held about northern Kurds. When Arez asked his friend why he had made so many assumptions about Arez and Kurds before the program, he could only reply “that’s what they told me.”

Since the 2006-2008 Iraqi Civil War, ethnic and religious groups have very little knowledge about others, particularly across the North and South divide. Arez knew he wanted to work to bridge this divide and break down stereotypes, but he was also in love with journalism. He found a way to do both in his program on Iraqi journalism training.

Arez’s initiative has three primary goals: training journalists, highlighting cultural news, and breaking down stereotypes among Iraqi people.

Iraq is a country still deeply wounded by war. The concept of a free and independent media is a new one; as a result, the country does not have a large pool of professional journalists or independent media outlets. Professional training for journalists, as well as continuing education for those currently in journalism and other related fields, is sorely needed.

As in most countries, bad news sells in Iraq. As a result, the majority of journalists and media publications focus on political, economic, and war issues, rather than culture. Not reporting on culture and everyday realities plays a major role in perpetuating stereotypes. Creating a “culture beat” parallel to the election beat, sports beat, and bombs beat would give people the opportunity to read about each other. Cultural journalism could play a very active role in helping to forge peace and understanding, both within Iraq and beyond its borders.

To help make this vision a reality, Arez and his team gather journalists from all over Iraq together, conduct some training, and divide them into small groups with ethnic and religious diversity. The small groups are sent out to do reporting together. After these intensive trainings, print and photojournalists are expected to continue engaging with each other and with other people. The program has trained twenty-six journalists thus far, and is currently planning to involve ten of those twenty-six as editors and trainers in the next training round. By continuously involving program graduates as trainers, Arez’s initiative is creating a sustainable training mechanism for the Iraqi press that will continue to break down stereotypes within the press and its readers for years to come. This will be a major factor in bringing peace and prosperity to Iraq.





# Farshad Ghodoosi



*Just Legal Systems*



For Farshad Ghodoosi, the primary function of a legal system is to protect individuals' rights, maintain order and provide consistency and predictability in economic, political and other important aspects of life. A doctoral student at Yale Law School from Iran, Farshad is intrigued by the very different ways that individuals' rights are considered and discussed in US and Middle Eastern legal systems. At his school in Iran, his constitutional professor never even mentioned Chapter III of the Iranian Constitution, which discusses the rights of people. In his class on the US Constitution, individual rights were the focal point.

Today, the Middle East is changing. Farshad believes that the legal systems of those countries experiencing change must also be modified and revamped. The Middle East needs more accountable, democratic, and just legal systems. Farshad's initiative discusses and analyzes the legal status quo and proposes improvements in how advocacy, court proceedings, and international law are approached in the region.

The role of society, religion, and international norms in creating and informing law is also considered. A legal system and a changing society are interdependent. Legal systems must carefully balance order and fairness, allowing for progress without being so transformational because it might create non-obedience.

The law also should not be kept only within the courtroom. Farshad believes that lawyers can best be of service by becoming well versed in other legal systems and by bringing novel claims based on grounds such as international law. They should also venture into the area of alternative dispute resolution. A parallel system to the formal judicial system that helps to resolve disputes in private settings would reduce the number of cases requiring court time, creating a more effective and less expensive system that is more likely to result to just and true conflict resolution between people.

For Farshad, lawyers' voices need to be heard about their legal systems. So, too, should lawyers listen to people about their needs from the legal system. It is possible to "make a difference in people's lives through law."



# Hamza Arsbi



Think. Search.

*Scientific Culture Society*



Science saved Hamza Arsbi's life. As a child with severe asthma, medical doctors, nurses, and tubes were his best friends. They were the reason Hamza could breathe. Hamza never forgot his debt to modern medicine and science. And as a teenager, Hamza came to see science not only as his lifesaver, but also as an integral part of his identity as a member of the human race. For Hamza, science is a language and a goal that all people can share, across borders, political affiliations, religions, and ethnicities.



The Scientific Culture Society was created to help spread that message and share with others the passion for science Hamza has. The Society works with children to make science as interactive and fun as it can be, and show them the many ways they can use science in their everyday lives. Too often, there is a great disconnect between policymakers and scientists, with policymakers afraid of science because they feel they cannot understand it, and scientists not greatly skilled in communication, and so unable to clearly translate findings into good policy. Hamza believes that better integrating science education, and making communities more scientifically literate, will help to produce better policies and solutions to the country's challenges and help preserve its natural resources.

Science is something all around us. We live because of it, we live by it, and we use it in daily life. And we should start appreciating those people who work in it and get involved in it. The Scientific Culture Society seeks to help people find their passion in science and share it. Through building more scientific literacy and love, we can build a better society, more open-minded and well-rounded individuals, and a global society that is better capable of skillfully and passionately shaping the future.



### **Connect:**



<https://www.facebook.com/science.culture.society>



# Majda Rahal



*Digital Literacy*





Majda Rahal, a computer science student at the University of Sciences and Technology Houari Boumediene in Algiers, is a web enthusiast and fierce advocate for what she calls the “fourth literacy.” In our increasingly online and plugged in world, the three traditional literacies (reading, writing, and calculus) are no longer adequate. Majda believes that digital literacy, a basic knowledge of coding and how the web works, will be an increasingly vital skill and should be taught to children in schools along with basic reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Majda is already a digital social entrepreneur, having co-founded eduDz, an award-winning educational website for high school and college students that provides learners with online support to succeed in their studies. Now, Majda is expanding her efforts to tackle digital literacy explicitly. Digital literacy can be improved in two main ways: by localizing tools already extant online and by

explicitly teaching coding and other digital skills in schools and workshops.

Tools like Mozilla’s “Popcorn Maker” allow people to create and remix videos. A video of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” created in Popcorn allows kids to easily access the play, providing explanations and definitions of hard vocabulary, as well as making the text more interactive. Tools like this are increasingly used in classrooms in the West, but very rarely are they altered to make them relevant in Arab contexts. Localizing online tools would go a long way in making web-based learning more practical and prevalent in the Arab world.

In order to directly teach digital literacy, Majda conducts workshops that actively guide students in the development of content for the web. Youth have an incredible amount of creativity; tapping into that creativity by encouraging them to make their own memes, online videos, and the like is fun for them and has an untold number of possible applications in the classroom and in careers. Through workshops, training sessions and online tools, Majda aims to enable people in the region, especially youth, to unleash their creativity and become innovators and content-creators on the Web rather than just passive consumers.

### **Connect:**

Online: [edudz.net](http://edudz.net)



[@majdanafissa](https://twitter.com/majdanafissa)



[informathicienne.blogspot.com](http://informathicienne.blogspot.com)

# Yasmeen Makarem



## *Palestinian Women's Urban Agriculture*



Palestinian refugees are estimated at about ten percent of the population in Lebanon, and the vast majority of them live in densely crowded refugee camps with little infrastructure and few options for integrating into a formal society. Yasmeen Makarem, a Lebanese Research Assistant in the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service at the American University of Beirut, believes that all Lebanese citizens have a duty to help alleviate Palestinian suffering rather than allowing the deep social fragmentation to continue. But how can they help Palestinians? Yasmeen says that “First of all, we need to forget pitying them.”

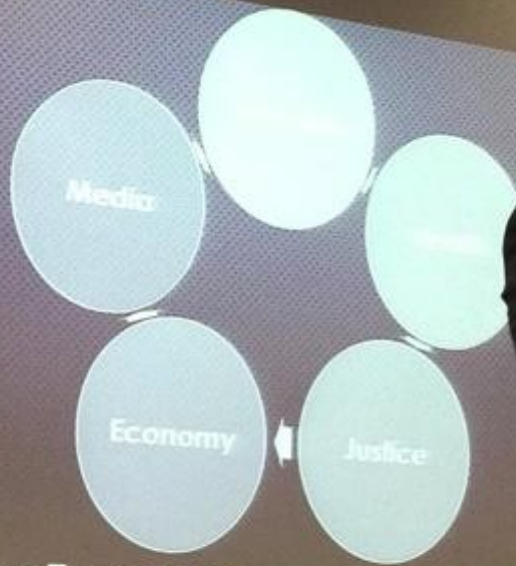
Instead, Yasmeen thinks that working on projects helping to empower refugees and recognizing their skills and abilities is a much more appropriate, humane, and effective way to take action. Today, most Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon actually reside on land considered to be outside Lebanese legislative authority. There is a great deal of intervention from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), and other intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. Most of these bodies focus on creating routes enabling Palestinian refugees to explore certain employment and educational opportunities. However, these programs often do not reach the most marginalized of the communities, and a visit to any of the refugee camps will quickly highlight that there is little to no programming about sustainability, agriculture, or food self-sufficiency.

Yet women in the camps regularly do as much planting as possible. Every possible space seems to be turned into a hub. But the limited space is often not used as efficiently as possible, and women cannot get ahold of or do not know the best plants to grow.

Yasmeen works in this niche, on a program helping empower Palestinian refugee women in green urban agriculture. The program builds capacity around agriculture techniques, cooperative businesses, and women's autonomy. Yasmeen holds training sessions that teach women how to grow fruits and vegetables in their own households with limited resources. Women grow food for their families, and what is left can be sold for profit. To help the women maximize their ability to sell, groups of five refugee households are grouped together to serve as a supplier for local restaurants. This creates more stable supplies to local buyers and a sense of community between the women. Many of the women involved are making around \$10 a day and are able to keep it under their control, granting them some autonomy in the family and the state.



# Yassine Boukourizia



THINK TANK / **ALTERNATIVE IDEAS & SOLUTIONS**  
EMAIL : [A.Y.BOUKOURIZIA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:A.Y.BOUKOURIZIA@GMAIL.COM) - PHONE : +212 674 674 674

*Alternative Ideas  
& Solutions*



Yassine Boukourizia wears many hats, including serving as the executive director of the Engage to Change program, a network of more than 6000 youth who work together to impact Morocco through Information and Communication Technology as well as youth leadership. He is also currently serving as the executive director of Darblanca Community Web Radio station in Morocco, a platform for community dialogue and youth empowerment via communications.



Yassine is passionate about youth activism and engagement. He believes in using online, radio, and other media as a way to spread young people's passions, concerns, and ideas. More recently, Yassine has been considering how societies train people to think. We have all been shaped from a very early age by our cultures, media, governments, and education systems. We have been surrounded by messages telling us the way to think, to talk, and to be.

Think tanks can serve as a space for people to question this training. There are relatively few think tanks in Morocco; those that exist deal primarily with issues most relevant to the upper classes. Yassine is using his background in communications and mass media along with sociology and anthropology to create another option.

"Alternative Ideas and Solutions" is a think tank meant not only for the policymakers, but also for the general population. The Think Tank works around five pillars: education, health, justice, economic, and media. Its primary mission is to encourage people to think by raising awareness about what is going on around them. It seeks to make news accessible and hold media accountable for delivering the truth, not only part of the story.

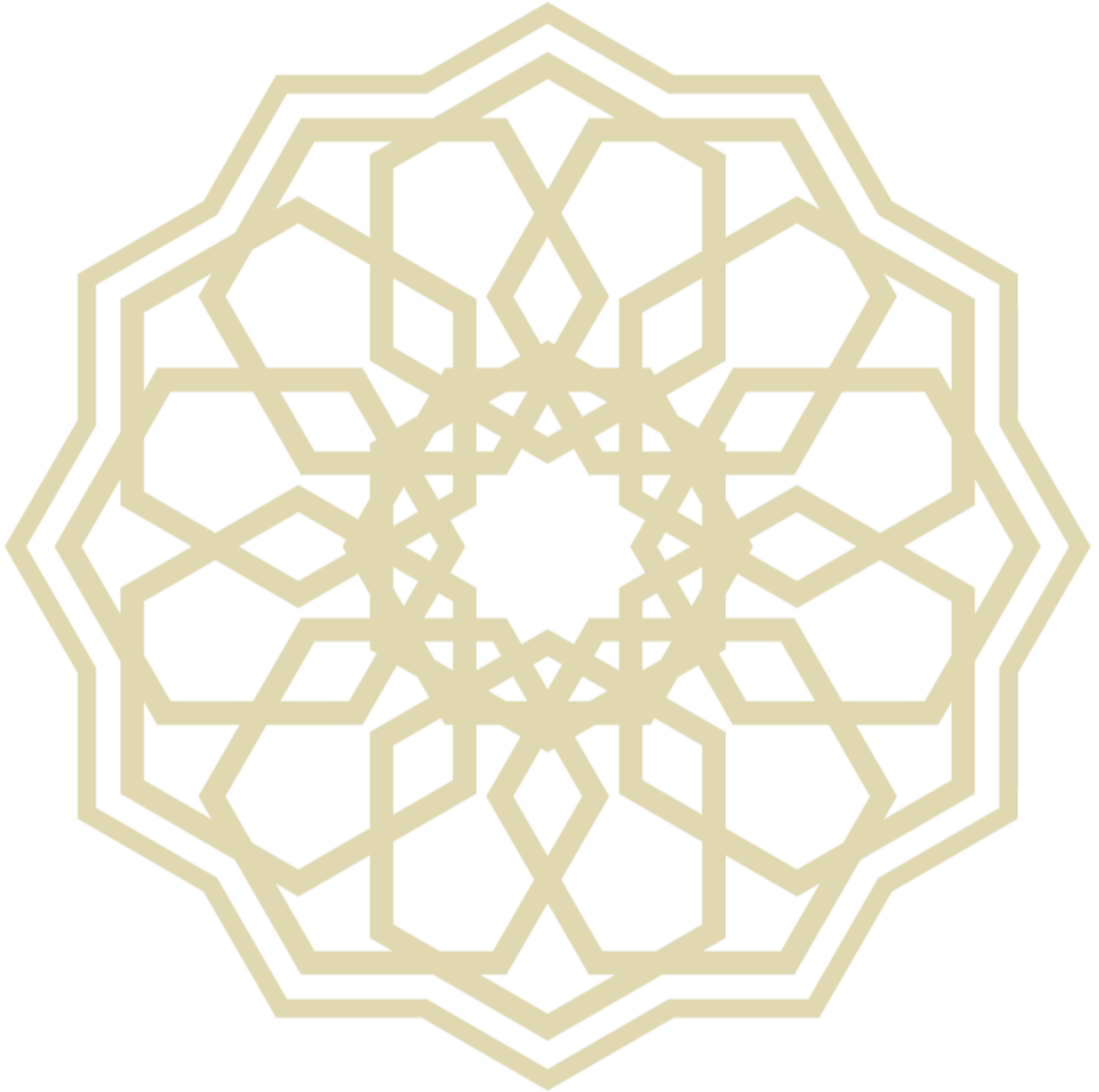
Yassine's inspiration for AIS comes from a self-fable he enjoys telling. When Yassine was little, he dreamed of changing the world. Over time, he became disheartened. "I cannot change the world," he thought to himself. Instead, he thought to perhaps change his country. Once again, after a great deal of time and effort, Yassine lost faith in his ability to change such a big thing. And so he focused on changing his family. But he could not change his family. And so, finally, Yassine determined to change himself. Along the way, a funny thing happened. The world became different too.

For Yassine, Alternative Ideas and Solutions is a way to think globally while acting locally. It is about empowering Moroccans to think and reconsider what they have been and are being told about their world, gaining the capacity to reshape their local realities.





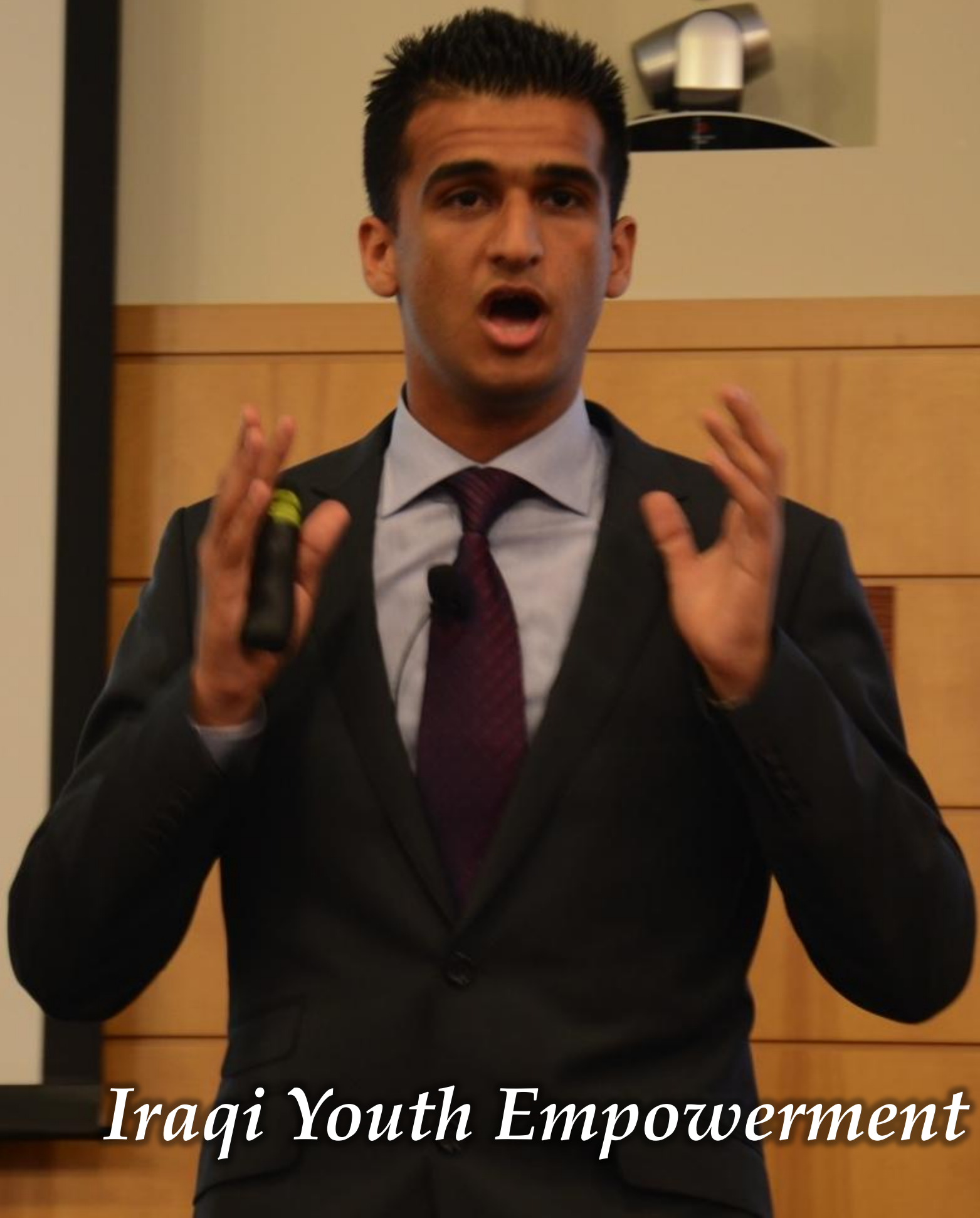
# Chapter 4



## Caring for Community



# Al-Nasir Al-Nasiry



## *Iraqi Youth Empowerment*

## Al-Nasir Al-Nasiry | *Iraqi Youth Empowerment*

One third of the Iraqi population is youth. Al-Nasir Bellah Al-Nasiry believes that, if we motivate them, if we give them the skills needed to innovate and be creative, and to actually lead, they will change the course of history. Indeed, they already have.

Zain, then twenty-three, and Noof, then twenty-two, had a dream four years ago of bringing International Day of Peace to Iraq, even while life was torn to pieces by bombings, assassinations, and violence. For two years, their requests for permission to hold the Baghdad Peace Festival were denied. But for two years, they refused to give up. And finally, on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011, they succeeded in gathering more than one thousand people for the first annual celebration of World Peace Day. That event was planned and executed by a team of one hundred youth volunteers. Its philosophy and purpose was “from you, by you, through you.”

From that celebration and the example of what youth activism could do, a movement was born. It continues to advocate the “from you, by you, through you” ideal, focusing on a three-fold free approach: Programming is done for free, takes place during youth free time on weekends and evenings, and participants are free from formalities or obligations.



Al-Nasir's movement trains youth volunteers between the ages of fifteen and thirty in issues related to activism around the environment, public health, human rights, advocacy, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Using youth peer training as a model, the movement creates a network of youth volunteers who have gone through training from people their age, do some volunteer work themselves, and then facilitate their own training sessions. The programming results in Iraqi youth volunteers with extensive capabilities in the three Es: education, empowerment, and employment.

This initiative creates a large network of youth volunteers, trained and experienced in a variety of arenas, who are capable of and keen to lead Iraq into a new democratic future.



# Ali Chehade



## AMENDS

American Middle Eastern Network for  
Dialogue at Stanford



## *The Dream Matcher*

# The Dream Matcher™

Supporting & sharing your dreams

Lebanese Fulbright Scholar Ali Chehade believes that every person has a superpower and can be a genie, making their own and others' dreams come true. To help everyone realize and use their superpowers, Ali created "The Dream Matcher."

The person capable of making your dream come true may be from another country, belong to another religion, speak a different language. They may be your next-door neighbor, but you have not spoken your dream aloud before. That's where The Dream Matcher steps in.



The Dream Matcher is a dream-matching engine that connects dreamers with people who can make those dreams come true. Multiple platforms help maximize the number of dreams that can be made into realities: An online platform allows dreams to be shared from anywhere in the world; real space Dream Matching events in communities allow for face-to-face social networking. The Dream Matcher uses the information provided by its members, both about what dreams they have and what resources they can provide, to generate meaningful matches.

People have things of incredible value to offer each other, but often we do not think of what we have to give as worthwhile, or are worried that what we want from others is too big to ask for. The Dream Matcher is about creating a safe space to voice those dreams and value those resources. Dreamers serviced by the Matcher have wanted to learn languages, meet local celebrities, and live on a farm.

When Ali was asked in an AMENDS Q&A session on the "biggest" dream The Dream Matcher had made come true, he responded with an unwillingness to quantify dreams. Some of the matches The Dream Matcher has made have been around apparently "simple" wishes – but making these dreams realities have been incredibly important for the dreamers. And that is the philosophy of The Dream Matcher: Everyone's dreams are important and valid. Ali wants to live in a world where visions are shaped into reality, where resources are shared, and where dreams do come true. Ali's challenge for you is to remember your superpowers and consider what you have to give, what dreams *you* can make come true.

## **Connect:**

Online: [thedreammatcher.com](http://thedreammatcher.com)



[@TheDreamMatcher](https://twitter.com/TheDreamMatcher)



# Dari AlHuwail



*Kuwait Dive Team*

## Dari AlHuwait | *Kuwait Dive Team*

The Earth's oceans cover more than seventy percent of the planet's surface. The water connects us and creates a mutual dependency. This means that pollution in one body of water hurts everyone. But it also means that taking action in one part of the ocean does a service to everyone.

The Kuwait Dive Team, "Guardians of the Sea," was founded in 1986 by young Kuwaiti volunteers who wanted to help protect Kuwait's marine environment. The Gulf's coral reefs, turtles, and unique marine ecosystems are in constant danger from sea temperature rises, pollution, and industrial development. "Guardians of the Sea" mitigates these dangers through direct action and education. The team also fosters the spirit of community service and volunteerism in Kuwait.

Coastal cleanup operations lift sunken boats, yachts, fishing nets, and harmful waste from the sea near Kuwaiti beaches. Boats and nets must often be removed from coral reefs themselves, taking care not to harm the reef anymore than it has already been damaged. The Dive Team also installs mooring buoys to protect coral reefs from further destruction from ship anchors, has established twenty-five underwater artificial reefs in the Jaber Al-Kuwait Marine Life Park, and performs coral transplantation projects.

Most recently, "Guardians of the Sea" have launched an educational van that visits communities with teaching resources about Kuwait's marine life and pollution threats. The van also includes materials for families to do their own beach cleanups.



Dari AlHuwait serves as a volunteer diver for the Dive Team, regularly hauling up nets, corroded piping, and other pollutants. He also serves as the Team's International Relations Officer, seeking to share the success and challenges of "Guardians of the Sea" with other communities. At AMENDS, Dari called on

attendees to consider launching or supporting their own eco service teams. He also called for further collaboration and communication between eco volunteers around the world.

### Connect:

Online: [freekuwait.org/](http://freekuwait.org/)



[www.facebook.com/guardiansofthesea](https://www.facebook.com/guardiansofthesea)



[@KuwaitDiveTeam](https://twitter.com/KuwaitDiveTeam)



[www.youtube.com/user/kuwaitdiveteam](https://www.youtube.com/user/kuwaitdiveteam)



[instagram.com/kuwaitdiveteam#](https://instagram.com/kuwaitdiveteam#)





# Frank Fredericks



*World Faith*

## The “Other”

Frank Fredericks grew up as an evangelical Christian in America, and he remembers always having a lot of questions about the “Other.” In the aftermath of 9/11, Frank saw how fearful many Christians were about people they had never met. Then, Frank traveled to Egypt to do research on Christian-Muslim relations. He noticed that, by and large, the Muslim and Christian communities there coexisted peacefully, but that all it took was someone throwing a rock through the window of a church or a mosque for five people to die in violent conflict by morning. Inspired by this experience, Frank reached out to interfaith organizations to get involved. What he found was that interfaith organizations typically consisted of religious leaders doing dialogue. This clashed with the image of young people he recalled from Egypt, who were most of those engaging in religious violence.



**“I don’t believe that old people talking can counter young people taking action.”**

To help fill a gap in youth-led interfaith action, Frank founded World Faith, a network of young people engaging in service projects. World Faith’s strategy is to curb religious violence in conflict-prone communities, believing that common action is the best way to inspire dialogue. The model sees peace-building and development as inextricably linked, and leverages religious youth as an asset in both of these efforts. Minimizing violence and maximizing prosperity requires working against the “otherism” so ingrained in our cultures and tackling the underlying economic motivations for conflict. World Faith brings religiously diverse youth together in their shared concern for community, and helps them do service to meet local needs. In doing so, it de-incentivizes violence, aids in global development, and helps build a world movement of interfaith action.

Since its inception, the program has logged over 75,000 hours of service and is active in fifteen countries. Operations are currently on hold in the Middle East and North Africa because of recent instability; Frank hopes to revamp local chapters in MENA in 2013.



## Connect:

Online: <http://worldfaith.org/>



<https://www.facebook.com/worldfaithngo>



[@WorldFaithNGO](https://twitter.com/WorldFaithNGO)



<http://www.youtube.com/worldfaithvideo>



# Ghadeer AlKhenaizi



*Project Tri*





Project Tri is a youth-run initiative in Bahrain promoting the three Rs of environmental sustainability: reduce, reuse, and recycle. The team encourages people to change daily habits and adopt greener lifestyles by simply managing the way they manage their waste.

In a Gulf country like Bahrain, Ghadeer feels that the luxurious life has, instead of improving lives, made it impossible for Bahrainis to live a normal, natural life. The country's culture is highly driven by mentalities of consumption, and there is very little conversation about the need to use resources more wisely.

Project Tri's slogan works against these mentalities, asking people to simply "give it a try!" There is a lot of conversation globally about sustainability. Ghadeer is most interested in how the role of an individual affects society as a whole. She wants to encourage people to think about the products they use, how those products reach them, and where they go afterwards.

To help communicate the importance of considering product value chains and the need to implement the three Rs, Project Tri conducts educational workshops and fieldtrips. Workshops are meant to show people how small changes in their consumption can have major impacts for sustainability but do not need to ruin their lives or decrease their standard of living. Fieldtrips focus on showing people the impact of mass waste. In March 2013, twenty young Bahrainis were taken to a landfill in Askar to see the density of their trash. When the bus door opened, the youth instantly covered their noses, feeling the discomfort of the heat and the smell and swatting at the flies that instantly swarmed. In that moment, Ghadeer saw the youth realizing how unbearable, not just unsustainable, the way they dealt with their waste was. Fieldtrips like the journey to the landfill help raise consciousness for people in a very physical way, increasing their motivation to consume differently. Project Tri also recently launched an [Android app](#) that locates the nearest recycling bin and provides directions to it, making recycling as easy as possible for people.



Bahrain has limited infrastructure for recycling due to a lack of demand. Project Tri is working to raise awareness, engaging people in the 3R culture, creating demand for recycling facilities and putting pressures on businesses and the government.

### Connect:



[TriBahrain](#)



[@Tri\\_BH](#)



[@Tri\\_BH](#)



[http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGuwbBHI0lsdZDuR5Nie\\_9A](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGuwbBHI0lsdZDuR5Nie_9A)





# Nadia Arouri



*I CAN MOVE*

Nadia Aroui, a Palestinian living in Austria, believes in the power of dance to help create bridges between individuals and social groups, hence tackling social development obstacles, such as fragmentation, inequality, and trauma. Dance has the ability to transform post-traumatic stress into “post-traumatic growth”.

“I CAN MOVE” is a community dance program in Palestine that empowers the marginalized by helping to improve the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social resiliency of each individual. The program trains local dancers in how to practically work with street children, differently-abled individuals, and violated women. The initiative seeks to break stereotypes, helping people communicate across the fault-line of their differences. Palestinian children and adults perform individually and together touring throughout Occupied Palestine.



This project was born out of Nadia’s desire to create a different reality for growing generations in Palestine. Unable to end the occupation and eliminate the violence, children and women can be empowered to use their experiences, no matter how difficult, as springboards for growing and creating a better reality.

When people hear that “I CAN MOVE” is a peace project, they often assume it brings Israelis and Palestinians together. The stereotypes and commercialization surrounding the term “peace” in connection to Palestine are frustrating for Nadia, who believes that the truest and most lasting peace projects are those that allow people to find peace within themselves. “I CAN MOVE” aims to help participants connect to themselves and their bodies, finding the peace in their homes, their society, their direct surroundings. It is also about finding and giving empathy. When participants find peace within themselves, they begin to actively search and work for it in their communities. They gain the ability to keep their arm stretched at length to others, no matter how difficult the situation becomes.

### Connect:

Online: [www.yante-icanmove.org/](http://www.yante-icanmove.org/)



[www.facebook.com/I.CAN.MOVE](https://www.facebook.com/I.CAN.MOVE)



**YOUTH, ART, & LEVANTE**



# Nihal Saad Zaghloul



*Imprint Movement*  
*Haraket Bassma*



Nihal Zaghloul is a Cairene. She and many of her friends participated in the protest movement that helped topple Mubarak's regime. During one of the protests, one of Nihal's friends was raped.

This was one the main incentives for Nihal and her friends to speak out and address this issue. They realized that silence makes the suffering worse and supports a culture of victim-blaming and violence normalization.

Nihal can't take away the fact that her friend was raped. But she can work to improve conditions for women in Cairo, helping resist the reasons for sexual harassment and trying to ensure that no one else has to go through the experience her friend had. And so she co-founded The Imprint Movement, *Harakat Bassma*.

The Imprint Movement is a voluntary social organization that works against the reality many Egyptian women face on a daily basis as they go about ordinary social activities in the public sphere. Its approach to sexual harassment is based on two fundamental principles: nonviolence and the power of dialogue. The movement categorically rejects the use of verbal or physical violence to combat harassment, believing that the only way to end harassment – itself a violent phenomenon – is through respectful dialogue. Their signature activity is anti-harassment patrols. During major holidays like Eid, when harassment is often at its most prevalent, groups of volunteers patrol public spaces who nonviolently intervene to help prevent incidents of harassment, take harassers to the police, and assist in legal claims. The Imprint Movement also conducts awareness and educational programs for local police working in the subway. These sessions help improve relations between the anti-harassment teams and the police on duty. The team is regularly growing and is continuing to grow capacity in covering larger areas more frequently as well as conducting advocacy. As their leader says, "We may be ordinary, but we are capable of extraordinary things."

### Connect:



<https://www.facebook.com/Imprint.Movement.eg>





# Salma Hegab



*Tweet Share3*

The 2011 Egyptian Revolution that resulted in the overthrow of Mubarak has been nicknamed the “Twitter Revolution,” so called because of the previously unparalleled use of social media in organizing and motivating political action. And certainly, a great deal of work was done via online platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. But many of the leading activists were very cognizant of a major gap. Post-Revolution, about 35% of Egyptians are regular users of these social media platforms. Not everyone has access to the internet.



Social media was seen by many activists as a window of freedom available online, even before the Revolution. But this window was not open for everyone, and Salma believes this is important for activists to consider. Post-Revolution, this online window is less important in some ways...because they have a door. Salma, along with several other activists, was chatting online one day and realized that they could not simply stay online and ignore the other segments of Egyptian society if they wanted real change to happen. The

Revolution had created a door they could walk through. Would they use it?

The team resolved to open the door and walk through, getting offline and onto the streets to talk to people. Within a few hours of this decision, made by people online who did not know each other in real space, TweetShare3 was born. It had a Facebook account, a Twitter, and a logo, all of which asked people to talk. The campaign urges protestors, activists, and other Twitter users to interact with people offline, developing conversations rather than a one-sided exchange of opinions. TweetShare3 combats the communication gap between various segments of Egyptian society through true dialogue on the streets. TweetShare3 activists talk to taxi drivers, slum dwellers, and other everyday Egyptians they meet on the street. Through regularly engaging in focused and purposeful dialogue, TweetShare3 participants work to foster unity and understanding between all Egyptians – on and offline.

### **Connect:**

Online: [tweetshare3.net/](http://tweetshare3.net/)



[@Tweet\\_Share3](https://twitter.com/Tweet_Share3)

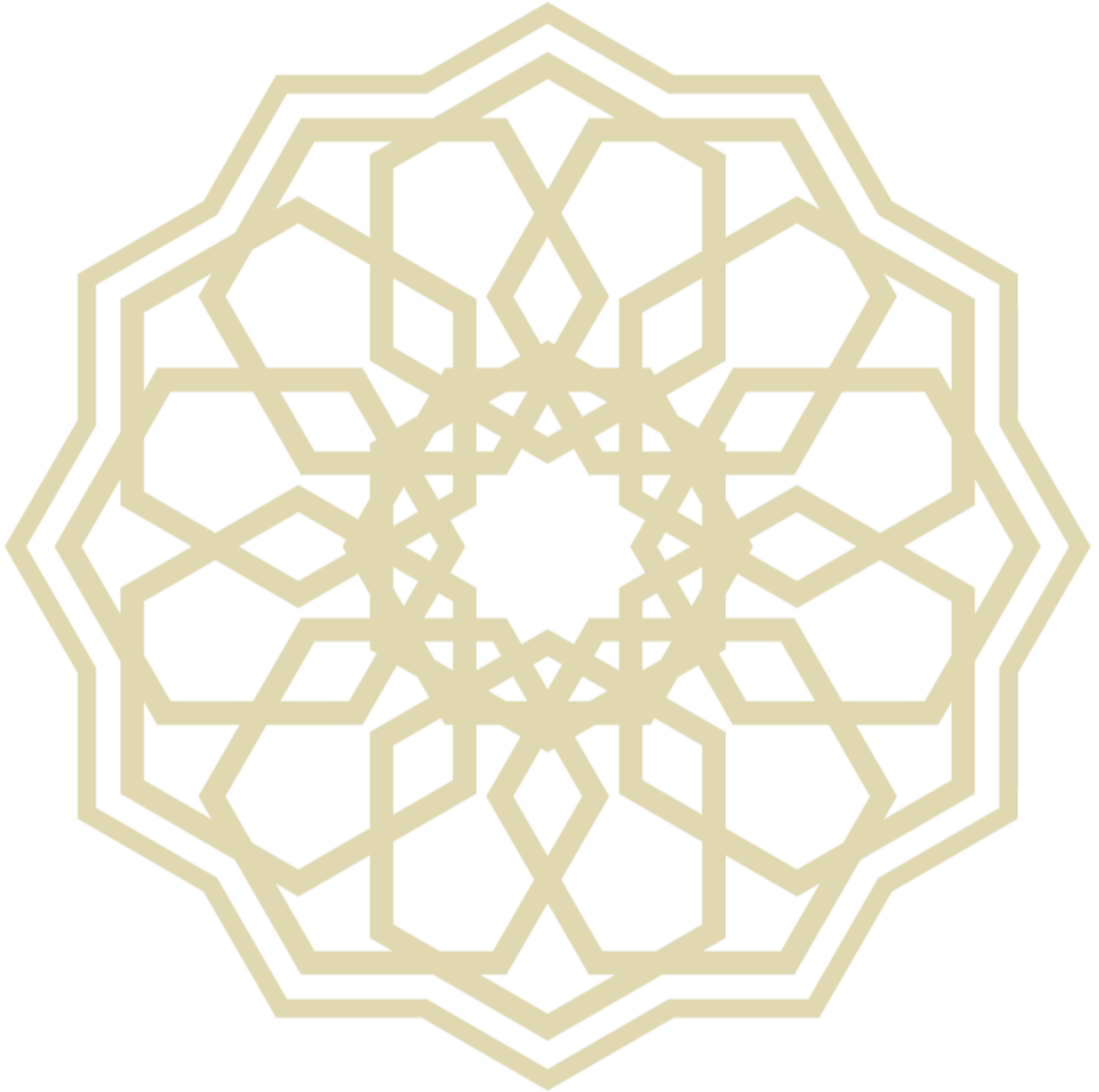


[www.facebook.com/tweetshare3](http://www.facebook.com/tweetshare3)





# Chapter 5



## Connecting Cultures



# Alana Levinson-LaBrosse



## *Kurdish Poetry Anthology*

One hundred fifty years ago, three of Alana Marie Levinson-LaBrosse's favorite Kurdish poets invited us to consider the state of humanity. For Alana, their poetry rings as true today as it did then. The same issues her beloved poets wrote about more than a century ago still haunt us. Alana believes in the power of poetry to speak to the human condition in ways that are relevant across time and space. Translating Kurdish poetry into English is not only translating the words and music themselves but also "translating a culture for a global community." By its very definition, working with this poetry is an act of "transgressing borders."



Kurdish poets, the classical more than the contemporary, write in a combination of languages, with influence from modern and classical Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, as well as several dialects of Kurdish. Poetry is difficult enough to translate from one language to another even when its original form is monolingual – the translator needs to convey not only the meaning of the poem, but also the rhythm, music, and sonic power as well. Because a single Kurdish poem might contain five or more languages, the linguistic knowledge required for a translator or translation team is high.

Last year, Alana ran a translation workshop at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS). Seven students brought six languages into the room and began working on making Kurdish, Turkish, and Arabic poetry accessible to an English audience. Last year's anthology of poems is available online for free download. In the next month, that anthology will also be published by 91st Meridian. This year, the second translation workshop included fifteen students with eleven languages working on bringing contemporary and classical poetry from around the world into English. The anthology of these translations will be released mid-summer.

But the work is far from finished. Alana hopes to complete a comprehensive anthology of Kurdish poetry. There is not, to her knowledge, such a book even in Kurdish, let alone in English. Such a project would bring regional poets together with emerging poets and translators. Alana believes these poets and translators, straddling tension lines between east and west, north and south, home and the academy, are the ideal cultural ambassadors. The act of translation, and the dialogue and education that an English anthology of Kurdish poetry would allow for, make community across ethnic tensions, tying individuals together in the service of creation.



# Ashley Lohmann

A photograph of Ashley Lohmann, a woman with long brown hair and freckles, smiling and looking towards the left. She is wearing a grey short-sleeved vest over a white top. She is seated at a table with a water bottle and some papers in front of her. The background shows a conference or meeting space with other people and a staircase.

*Beyond the Bombs*

Ashley Lohmann is a Los Angeles-based freelance journalist and Associate Editor for the Middle East Desk at Fair Observer,

a crowd-sourced media platform providing analysis of global issues. Passionate about building cross-cultural understanding, Ashley is concerned by the limited lens through which most Westerners view the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In a world where violence and conflict dominate news headlines about the region, Western audiences often need reminding that phrases like “Arab Jew” and “moderate Islamist” are not oxymorons. When we lose sight of the people, culture, diversity, and natural beauty that also exist in the MENA region, we risk forgetting the human lives behind the casualty counts and refugee numbers.



In November 2012, Ashley launched *Beyond the Bombs*, a transmedia project redefining how Western audiences view, understand, and connect with the MENA region. Hosted on a multimedia web platform, *Beyond the Bombs* clarifies misconceptions about the MENA region by publishing articles, photos, videos, and audio clips that showcase aspects of the region rarely seen in the news and humanize the adversity that does make the headlines.

Ashley produces original content for the website and republishes outside content relevant to the *Beyond the Bombs* mission. This summer, she plans to relaunch the website with a new, interactive design and expand it to host original content from contributors

across the globe. Ashley is also developing for the platform a reality web series showcasing the MENA region through youth. Ultimately, *Beyond the Bombs* may include a retail branch, which would sell handcrafted merchandise imported from the MENA region and accompanied by short video messages from the local artisans.

*Beyond the Bombs* is meant to showcase “the good, the bad, the everyday, and the unexpected” of the Middle East and North Africa for its visitors, allowing them to “connect with a region that is largely inaccessible to them through mainstream media and work together to reduce the misunderstandings and politically-driven tension that have defined the East-West relationship.”

### Connect:

Online: [www.btbombs.com](http://www.btbombs.com)



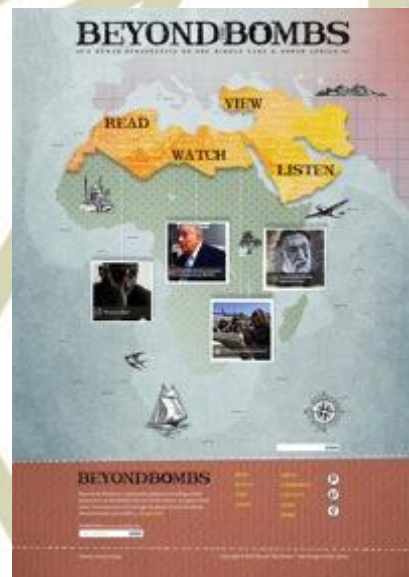
[www.facebook.com/btbombs](http://www.facebook.com/btbombs)



[@BtBombs](https://twitter.com/BtBombs)



[pinterest.com/btbombs/](http://pinterest.com/btbombs/)





A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a blue short-sleeved blouse with a ruffled collar and black trousers, stands on a stage. She is positioned in front of a large projection screen. The screen displays the text 'Becca Farnum' at the top, followed by 'NDS' in large green letters, and 'tern Network for Stanford' in smaller green letters below it. To the left of the woman, a black metal railing is visible. The background wall is made of light-colored wood panels.

# Becca Farnum

NDS

tern Network for  
Stanford

*Environmental  
Peacebuilding*

In the spring of 2011, the world's eyes were on the Middle East and North Africa. But Arab countries were not the only ones protesting. In countries like Kenya and Uganda, thousands of people took to the streets, calling for government reforms, more attention to unemployment, and the like. Members of the political opposition were thrown in jail, and people organized their own "Tahrir Squares."

On the ground, similar actions were happening in both the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. And political action in both countries was deeply tied to issues of food justice. Yet Western media portrayed events in the two regions very differently. For countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, headlines read along the lines of "Bread riots in Kenya." But in the Middle East and North Africa, Western media focused much more on the political nature of the events than their food-based motivations.



A false dichotomy has emerged around how the West frames food, water, and environmental resources in the two regions. For Sub-Saharan Africa, these issues are depoliticized, and not enough attention is given to root causes of injustice. In the Middle East and North Africa, quite the opposite problem occurs: Environmental resources are overpoliticized and oversecured. Diplomats, policymakers, and academics frequently speak of water in the Middle East as the next motivator for a regional war. Food security is considered something necessary to help protect governments, not people. Environmental resources are seen as something to be fought over and militarily secured.

Many academics and politicians fear that stress over seemingly scarce environmental resources becomes a breeding ground for conflict. But there is another view: That cooperation is possible over scarce and vital resources, and that this cooperation can open the door to other forms of cooperation. Becca Farnum believes that the relationships between food, water, environmental justice, and military security can be seen not as a motivation for conflict, but as a way to bring together vastly different political and religious ideologies to work toward mutual self-interest. But the possibility for environmental cooperation and peace building is too often silenced or not considered at policy levels. Becca seeks to amplify the voices speaking out for cooperation around environmental resources in the academic and policy realms.

### **Connect:**

Online: [rebeccafarnum.com](http://rebeccafarnum.com)



[Rebecca Leanne Farnum](https://www.facebook.com/RebeccaLeanneFarnum)



[@BeccaFarnum](https://twitter.com/BeccaFarnum)



[Rebecca Farnum](https://www.linkedin.com/in/RebeccaFarnum)



# Laura McAdams

*Curriculum Development*

As a nineteen-year-old American traveling in the Arab world for the first time, Laura McAdams remembers feeling afraid the first time she heard the muezzin at a nearby mosque call the people to prayer. Laura attributes much of this irrational fear to the simplistic and stereotypical portrayals of the Middle East and North Africa in her American educational experience.

This encouraged Laura to study and work in the MENA region. She spent fourteen months in Morocco as a Fulbright Scholar, and most recently returned to work with an indigenous women's weaving cooperative. But she has never forgotten how the depiction of the MENA in her primary and secondary schools influenced her first opinions of the region. During her time as a master's student at the University of Pennsylvania, Laura decided to do something about it.



Through her research as a master's student, Laura has analyzed how the Middle East and North Africa are written about in five of the most commonly-used U.S. history textbooks. She has found four major problems: the conflation of the terms "Arab" and "Muslim"; the presentation of violence without context; a false dichotomy and struggle between tradition and modernity in the region; and the portrayal of Arab women as victims. Laura sees these stereotypes continuously reinforced in mainstream educational curriculum in the United States. If these are the messages American children are receiving, it is no wonder that most Americans have so much fear and mistrust of people from the region.

In order to combat the widespread stereotypes in U.S. education, Laura partnered with a local organization to create an alternative curriculum unit. The new unit teaches students about Arab culture and history through the life of Umm Kulthum, the Egyptian superstar vocalist. The lesson plans are designed to combat stereotypes while aligning with U.S. educational standards, making them as easy as possible for teachers to utilize.

The curriculum unit has been successfully used in a number of classrooms across Philadelphia. Laura's next challenge is to encourage more teachers across the United States to utilize the curriculum. She hopes to use this unit as a model to help people think about the ideologies behind curriculum and how education on the whole can be improved to help foster global understanding and dialogue.



## Connect:

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# Nargis Azaryun



*Road to Equality  
and Development*



Nargis Azaryun was born in 1994 in Kabul. She went to a secret school during the Taliban regime and studied with her parents at home. Now, she is able to study law at Dunya University. But she has never forgotten the impact needing to hide her books had on her education. Nor has she lost any of the love for her country, people, and culture. In February 2012, she established a nongovernmental organization called the Road to Equality and Development (RED). RED is a civil society organization whose mission is to encourage Afghan youth to help improve Afghanistan, working beyond religious, ethnic, and language differences.

RED regularly organizes film clubs, poetry reading nights, festivals, and campaigns to celebrate Afghan culture.

Recently, RED launched a Facebook Campaign that asked Afghans “What does homeland mean to you?” The thousands of messages the team received in response were printed and posted around Kabul.

“Appreciating the Differences” brought together youth from across Afghanistan’s different provinces to represent their culture via customs, food, music, and drama. The Festival helped reintroduce Afghan culture, identified common values across the provinces, and brought Afghan youth together to work for their country’s development.

RED also works with women, orphans, and the environment. Afghan women are often placed in prisons and safe houses without just cause. RED brings women together to make handicrafts and prepare exhibitions for their products. At Shahed Orphanage, RED provides education and stable relationships for about twenty victims of the Afghan civil war. A “Green and Clean Kabul” Campaign does environmental work and garbage cleanup, fostering a sense of responsibility and community service amongst participants.

Through all of this work, Nargis hopes that “my brother and his generation will be writing the future of an Afghanistan where hope, happiness, and prosperity will replace war in the face of the country!”



# Nicholas Glastonbury



*Kurdish LBGTQ  
Oral Histories*

“If I told anyone here that I’m Kurdish I would be killed...Nobody knows I’m Kurdish, outside of my close friends. I can’t say that I’m a Kurd when I’m walking on the street or when I go somewhere. Because I’m a transgender individual. Do you understand? You can accept your Kurdish identity or you can accept your LGBT identity. I accepted my LGBT identity, my trans identity. Unfortunately, I can’t accept my Kurdish identity.”

These are the words of Didem, a Kurdish transgender woman who lives in Diyarbakır, a large city in the southeast of Turkey. Nicholas Glastonbury met her at the Istanbul Pride Parade. Didem’s words are words we do not often hear spoken aloud, and that most people do not have access to. Nicholas wants to change that. He believes that stories like Didem’s need to be told, need to be heard. For Nicholas, visibility is a central step in working against homophobia and transphobia, locally and globally.

If LGBT people in Turkey are seen first, not as LGBT, but first and foremost as people, people who work, and laugh, and struggle to make ends meet, just like everyone else, the LGBT movement in Turkey will find working for rights and acceptance a great deal easier.

Nicholas’ initiative is focused on creating empathy and raising the visibility of LGBT persons in Turkey by creating a space for stories like Didem’s to be told.

Nicholas will be working in Turkey to collect oral histories from local LGBT activists. These oral histories, along with other stories, personal blogs, and news clips, will be collected and published on an online platform and via a printed publication. The publications will be intended for use at the local level. Didem told Nicholas: “When my family learned that I was trans my older brother tried to kill me three times. I was kept in the house like a prisoner for eight and a half months. They put a chain around my foot so I wouldn’t run. For three years I was tortured continuously, and by my own brother. I was beat up, I was denigrated. I tried to commit suicide. For three years I went through these things. Just because I’m trans.” Didem’s story doesn’t show just that transphobia is difficult to live with, but that transphobia functions on the local level, and fighting against it must happen there as well.





# Que Mykte' Newbill



*Youth Speaks*

## Que Mykte' Newbill | *Youth Speaks*

Youth Speak is an urban youth initiative born through collaboration between an American slam poet and Jordanian hip-hop artists.

One of the hallmarks of the Arab Revolutions was the use of the urban arts (rap music, slam poetry, graffiti, etc.) to express the political struggles and aspirations of the people in the region. The youth and young artists who lead this movement drew on the roots of the American hip-hop experience.

Driven by this common theme of social equity and the talent of urban youth, Youth Speaks seeks to build collaboration between youth and young urban artists in the North America and the Middle East. Through cultural exchanges, safe spaces, and mentorship, the goal is to capitalize on the parallel social challenges faced by global urban youth by fostering a dialogue that enlightens and empowers through the artistic mediums of hip-hop and slam poetry.

Que Mykte' Newbill is a Scoville Fellow and Research Analyst at the Stimson Center, an independent think-tank based in DC. His research examines the Arab world's shifting political landscape, ongoing economic challenges, and evolving security threats in the midst of the Arab uprisings. Prior to joining Stimson, Que worked as an associate on a California demography-related project. Before that, Que worked at the Center for Strategic Studies (Amman, Jordan) and studied Arabic in Jordan.

Concurrently, Que teaches and mentors youth in afterschool programs. He has taught in Atlanta, San Francisco, and now Washington D.C. A staunch education advocate and also a slam poetry artist, his work blends the themes of social justice and youth empowerment through expressions of the urban arts. As a slam poetry artist, he has competed and won competitions across the US. From his travels in the Middle East, he hopes to build relationships and collaborations between the urban art communities there.

He currently serves on the advisory councils of Each One Reach One, a Bay Area organization that transforms incarcerated youth through education and the performing arts, and the Georgia Innocence Project, an Atlanta-based nonprofit legal clinic that works to overturn wrongful convictions and exonerate the wrongly prosecuted.





# Todd Ruffner



*Project on Middle  
East Democracy*



**“It seems amazing to me that someone can make a decision on cutting funding or declaring war and not even talk to someone from that region.”**

Every day, U.S. Members of Congress vote on and make decisions about funding and policies that directly affects the Middle East and North Africa. Yet many policymakers lack a nuanced understanding of the region writ large.

Todd Ruffner currently serves as the Advocacy Associate at the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) in Washington, D.C. POMED has a robust program that brings individuals from the Middle East to meet with U.S. policymakers. Now, Todd is working to create a parallel program that organizes delegations of Congress members and staff to visit the Middle East in order to engage with a diverse network of advocates,

activists, government officials, and community leaders. While Congressional delegations to the region are already common, POMED seeks to plug policymakers into its vast network in order to provide a more complete understanding of regional dynamics. Host governments generally have an immense influence on the visitors’ meeting agendas, and POMED aims to ensure that these visits incorporate a broader range of actors.

By bringing U.S. policymakers to the region, Todd hopes to expand Members’ understanding of the region and better inform their actions in the government. Hearing directly from those who are affected by policy can have a profound impact on decisions, ideally transforming empathy into policy.

**“There’s not a chance that we’ll give up.”**

The challenges to this work are great; engaging with policymakers is often frustrating and time-consuming. But if we don’t push for these discussions, it should not be a surprise if they never occur. It is important to engage with policymakers to supply them with information that will allow them to make constructive and thoughtful policy. Only through continued engagement will hearts, minds, and realities begin to change.

### **Connect:**

Online: <http://pomed.org/>



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Project-on-Middle-East-Democracy/15821859391>



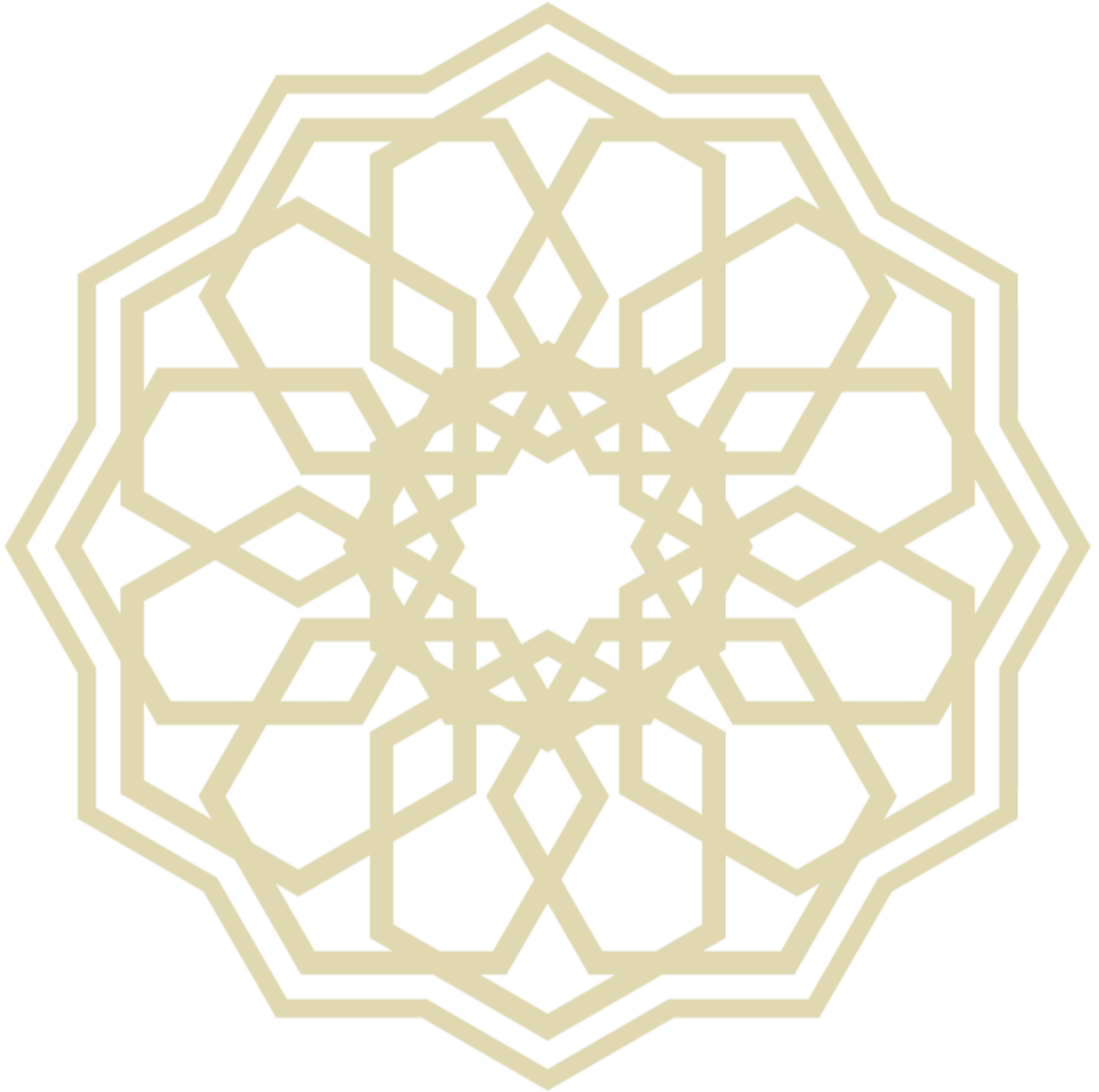
[@POMEDwire](https://twitter.com/POMEDwire)







# Chapter 6



Impact Enterprise



# Agam Rafaeli

A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and blue patterned tie is juggling four yellow lemons. He is looking upwards with a focused expression. He is standing on a paved walkway next to a large, leafy green tree. In the background, there is a building with large windows and a palm tree. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

*Hi-Tech Partnership*

Agam Rafaeli, like the country he lives in, grapples daily with inner conflicts. He served five years as an officer in the Israeli Defense Force's Technological Unit and is dedicated to his country's security, but he also desperately hopes for and works tirelessly towards peace. His training is in computer science, but he's involved in Seeds of Peace and is a delegate to the Israeli Labor Party's Steering Committee.

Agam has found resolution to these tensions in his work on bridging the Arab and Israeli hi-tech sectors. Globally, the hi-tech industry is a driving engine of economic progress. The Israeli hi-tech world, often considered second only to Silicon Valley, is currently running into a glass ceiling, restricted by Israel's small market and a shortage of engineers. The Arab World's technological market provides incredible opportunities and has the potential to help Israel become a partner with its Middle East neighbors. Agam saw hi-tech sector connections as a way to create real world interactions, and so he sought work in the Palestinian hi-tech sector in Israel – a rarity for young Israelis – upon completing active duty with the Israeli military. In spite of numerous applications to various companies, Agam was unable to break through the many formal and informal barriers between the two communities.



**“Treaties are signed by governments; peace is made by people.”**

Two years after being unable to find a job in the Palestinian sector, Agam still believes in the multiple benefits that would result from hi-tech cooperation between Arabs and Israelis. For him, the most exciting and important is the potential for business relationships to help foster peace. There has yet to be a solid business venture with two co-founders, one Israeli and one Arab. There have been co-investments, but there has not been one enterprise built from the ground with equal input. Agam believes that building a company that is shared will go a long way in bridging the two hi-tech sectors and, by extension, the two communities as a whole.

Agam's vision is one of shared work, shared labor, shared future. When asked in an AMENDS Q&A by delegate Ali Chehade from Lebanon about the threat of idealism and whether or not such a venture was truly realistic, Agam acknowledged the very real and present legal, cultural, and economic barriers to creating a shared business. He also, though, challenged attendees to consider whether they wished to follow norms and adhere to reality or buck trends and create the reality they want to exist.



# Alia Mahmoud



*Sustainable  
Competitiveness Council*

For the first twenty-six years of her life, Alia Mahmoud called 22<sup>nd</sup> and Broadway home. In the spring of 2011, that home became Carthage. She felt the need to return to Tunisia following the Jasmine Revolution to help shape the transition, believing the state has a golden opportunity to redefine itself and its core values.

Like other Tunisians, Alia soon encountered realities about her country that were never before exposed. She felt she was seeing the “real” Tunisia, not the checklist that made foreign direct investment so appealing. In the wake of its revolution, Tunisia has been forced to confront quite a different checklist: extremely disadvantaged regions, an alarmingly high unemployment rate, and rising poverty.



To help combat these inequalities, Alia joined the Global Shapers Tunis Hub, a network of young people driven to make an impact in their local communities. The Global Shapers program is an initiative of the World Economic Forum, mobilizing youth leaders in urban areas. The Tunis Hub believes their country can be an example for sustainability and competitiveness and a role model for the transition from autocracy to democracy.

Traditional indicators for competitiveness include institutions, infrastructure, and market efficiency. In 2012, the WEF Global Competitive Index included two additional indicators: environmental and social sustainability. In light of this, the Global Shapers Tunis Hub is working to create a “Sustainable Competitiveness Council,” working with Tunisian business leaders and youth activists to create discourse of environmentally and socially sustainable business practice. Alia believes that “we don’t have to sacrifice sustainability for economic recovery,” spreading the idea that the more sustainable Tunisian business is now, the more economically competitive it will be in the long run.



The Sustainable Competitive Council is finding examples of NGOs and businesses in Tunisia that are already doing environmentally and socially sustainable practices and highlighting their work for other groups in the country. Practices such as company-wide recycling and professional training for mentally handicapped youth are rare in Tunisia. Showcasing a CEO and an NGO doing exactly that is helping to change local assumptions that sustainability is not feasible.

Moving forward the Sustainable Competitiveness Council intends to bring businesspeople, sustainability advocates, and policymakers together to help provide the strategic leadership needed in reshaping Tunisia’s identity. Of her country’s future, Alia says: “Tunisia has this once in history opportunity to define itself. I’m lucky enough to have it taking place during my lifetime. And I want to make the most of that lifetime and this chance.”

### **Connect:**

Online: [globalshapers.org/hubs/tunis](http://globalshapers.org/hubs/tunis)



[forumblog.org/2012/08/shaping-the-future-of-tunis/](http://forumblog.org/2012/08/shaping-the-future-of-tunis/)



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[gstunis.blogspot.com](http://gstunis.blogspot.com)



[linkedin.com/pub/alia-mahmoud/5/a42/524](https://www.linkedin.com/pub/alia-mahmoud/5/a42/524)



# Rena Zuabi



*Palestinian Ag Incubator*



Farming is a pillar of the Palestinian economy, perhaps more so, however, it is a cornerstone of Palestinian culture, history, and a transcendent symbol of Palestinian resistance. Despite its importance, the agriculture sector is described as one “condemned by neglect”. The Palestinian Authority allocates only around 1 percent of its annual budget to the agriculture sector, and from 2001 to 2005, 85 percent of this allocated budget went towards the agriculture ministry’s staff salaries. While more donor aid has focused on agricultural development in recent years, many projects are implemented within a post-Oslo and post-Paris Protocol neoliberal economic development framework, which emphasizes export-oriented cash crops that are reliant on Israeli permits and bureaucracy. Ultimately, the challenges facing the agriculture sector are multilayered and delicate: Farmers are faced with the impossible task of yielding larger, higher quality harvests with increasingly

harsher and more brutal Israeli policies of resource expropriation and forced transfer. The larger sector also suffers from development projects that do not hit at the political roots of the development problem, which is the occupation and Palestinian economic reliance on it.

Although there is no replacement for assertive diplomatic action in support of Palestinian rights, there are steps that can be taken on the ground to forge greater economic self-sufficiency. Therefore, Rena’s initiative will establish an incubator for sustainable agribusinesses in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as one path through which to address the challenge of agriculture sector dependence on donor aid and the Israeli occupation. Rena’s initiative was founded on the idea that building the foundations of economic self-sufficiency is one path, one of many, that must be forged to assert Palestinian rights and self-determination.

The incubator will serve as a place where agribusinesses can build, connect, and inspire paths for sustainable growth and positive social impact. The mission of the incubator is to support micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSMEs) starts-ups in agriculture by providing the tools necessary to reach commercial success through sustainable business models, with a vision to be a laboratory for the future of sustainable agribusinesses in the OPT.

### **Connect:**

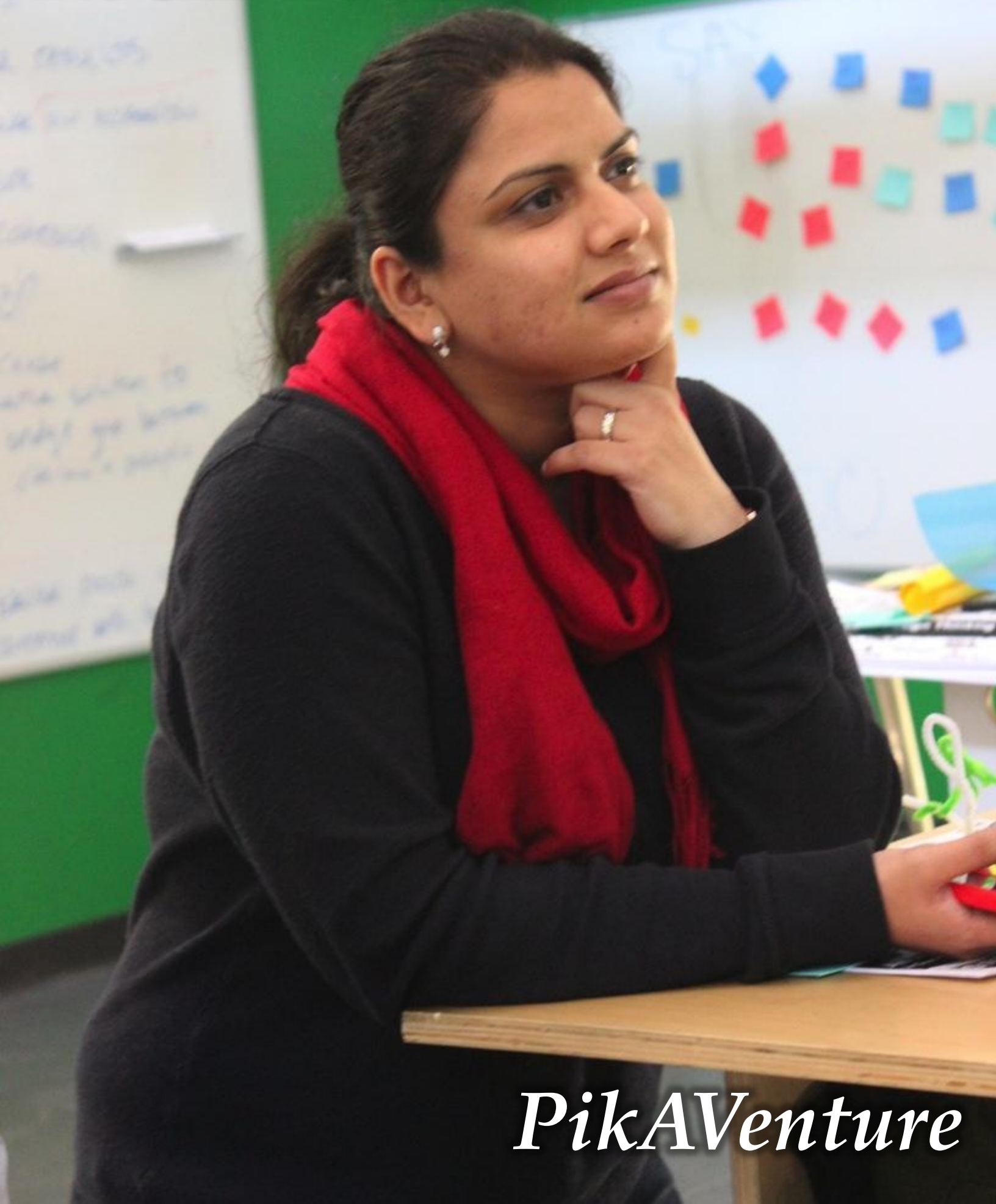


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# Ruchi Dana



*PikAVenture*

Dr. Ruchi Dana was born and brought up in Libya by a family of doctors. When her father moved to Dubai to become an entrepreneur, Ruchi noticed that the life of a start-up businessman was harder than a doctor in an established practice. Perhaps its no surprise, then, that Ruchi went to medical school. As an undergraduate, Ruchi developed five new ophthalmological devices and published groundbreaking research. She had a brilliant medical career in front of her, but the seed of enterprise planted in her from her father's experience in Dubai would not be ignored. And so Ruchi put her budding medical career on hold to help develop her family business, Dana Group. At Dana Group, she established the Cable-Management-Systems Division. While working in Dubai, Ruchi went through the global economic crisis as an entrepreneur. She carries several lessons from the crisis, but perhaps the most significant one is about the importance of relationships. As CMS Division head, Ruchi took in a supply from China that arrived late and cost more than it was expected to. She was not obliged to accept the shipment, but Ruchi decided strengthening a relationship and helping another business to not go under was more important than profit by the bottom line. That decision won the company profound respect from the partner and a strong relationship that has proven mutually beneficial multiple times.



Dr. Dana is now formalizing her business skills through an MBA at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Ruchi feels that the Middle East and North Africa have given her and her family a great deal, and wanted a way to give back. Her background as a doctor drawn to entrepreneurship who has lived the risks and hardships of business make her perfectly suited to serve as a mentor for start-ups. And so "Pik A Venture" was born.

Pik A Venture is a crowd-funding and equity-funding platform for the Middle East and North Africa, created as a stepping-stone to success for startups and businesses in the region. The program is especially focused on helping youth to raise seed capital, promoting entrepreneurship by providing guidance to high-potential startups through an incubator and accelerator. Ruchi's time at Stanford has given her insight into Silicon Valley's environment; through Pik A Venture, Ruchi intends to help bring that entrepreneurial ecosystem to the Middle East and North Africa. In its initial phase, Pik A Venture began with a competition in universities for bids and is now working with twelve student startups on a variety of issues. One seeks to set up an online platform for 3D viewing of rental spaces in the region. Pik A Venture is providing them with networking space, mentorship, and crowd-funding support.

### **Connect:**

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[@PikAVenture](https://twitter.com/PikAVenture)



[pinterest.com/PikAVenture/](https://pinterest.com/PikAVenture/)



[instagram.com/ruchidana](https://instagram.com/ruchidana)



[indian-crowdfunding-pikaventure.tumblr.com](http://indian-crowdfunding-pikaventure.tumblr.com)



# Sabera Daqiq



## Afghan Women Handicraft



As an Afghan female, Sabera Daqiq is no stranger to violence against women. Al-Jazeera's classification of the country as the most dangerous place for women is seen very clearly on its streets. But one day while walking to see a friend, Sabera had the rare opportunity to speak to Nafisa, a woman who was suffering abuse at the hands of her husband. And in multiple conversations, Nafisa ignored Sabera's questions about the abuse and whether she wished to escape it. Eventually, Sabera came to see that Nafisa's only remaining male relative, an uncle,

could not financially support Nafisa and would be shamed by his community if he took Nafisa from her husband. Nafisa could run away from her husband to a shelter, but would likely stay there only until another husband was found for her, at which point she would no longer be able to see her children. Her options were limited, and so Nafisa became resigned to the abuse. Like eating a meal, violence became such a part of daily life that it was invisible.

Nafisa's story is all too common. While Sabera was wrestling with how to help, she came to realize that financial independence is a critical component of women's empowerment and ability to escape violence. More importantly, Sabera decided that women should not have to leave their homes and families. Rather than running away to escape violence, Sabera wanted to help women defeat violence. Making financial contributions to the household gives women authority to make decisions, earns them respect, and allows them to be self-sufficient. Thinking about the kind of skills Afghani women like Nafisa commonly have, Sabera and her friend decided to start Afghan Women Handicraft.

Afghan Women Handicraft operates by carefully monitoring products' value chains. The program works with the most needy women in the community. It begins by identifying what skills the women have, helping to train them in handicraft as needed. Raw materials for handicrafts are provided on a loan. The final products are then purchased from the women at ten percent more than the price they would fetch at the local market. Materials are sold locally and shipped to the United States, where volunteer students sell them in their universities. Because communication occurs between every part of the chain, the project is able to easily identify the most popular products and focus on them. This improves prices and profits. Profits are currently being saved to help build a club in Afghanistan owned and operated by women that will include a gym, library, canteen, and net café. Today, Afghan Women Handicraft helps women like Nafisa stand on their own feet, defeating the violence that is part of their everyday lives instead of becoming resigned to it or only temporarily escaping it.



# Samer Azar



*AltCity*

Samer Azar left New York in 2009, the midst of the financial crisis, with a Master's from Columbia University. He was heading back to Beirut to join a startup real estate development firm. He quickly realized that being a startup in Lebanon was easier said than done. Lack of infrastructure and small business supports were quickly identified as being the main roadblocks for SME success. So in 2011, he joined a group of like-minded entrepreneurs and together they started inventing an alternative city, and AltCity was born.



AltCity is a story of young Lebanese individuals with a dream who were stubborn enough to pursue an ambitious project: building a business with a conscience in one of the most difficult places to do business in the world. It is a hub for innovators in media, design, and technology; a community center; and a startup support space that aims to provide entrepreneurs with the tools, the resources and the community they need to innovate and build enterprises that can drive the Lebanese economy and society forward. At its core, AltCity is a social enterprise that aims to maximize community engagement while being profitable.

Situated in the heart of the vibrant district of Hamra in Beirut, AltCity is a large, open space where people can eat, meet, co-work and startup enterprises; an ecosystem built around formal and informal spaces that engages young professionals, students, various organizations through a continuous stream of events, workshops, trainings, meet-ups. It also uses videoconferencing technology to connect the Lebanese community to other centers of innovation around the world.

Samer is passionate about social entrepreneurship and the process of identifying, mentoring and investing in high impact entrepreneurs with disruptive, scalable ideas. He believes that it is the most exciting time to live in the MENA region, an area of rapidly shifting paradigms, hungry for new projects that will reconstruct its shattered societies and unemployed youth. AltCity's hope is to be making a small step towards this new MENA region, one that is innovative, creative, collaborative and competitive in the 21st century and the digital economy.

### **Connect:**

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[@AzarSamer](https://twitter.com/AzarSamer)



# Sarah Mousa



*Grassroots Solar Power*



While an undergraduate student at Princeton University, Sarah Mousa had the chance to study abroad at The American University in Cairo. That summer, Sarah was struck by the prevalence of unplanned districts in Cairo. Some of these slums lack basic infrastructure, including limited electricity and water access. But Sarah saw something particularly intriguing on some of the roofs of these communities: homemade solar water heaters. They seemed to her the perfect solution; they effectively heated water using affordable materials and a universal and inexhaustible energy source.



Excited about the possibilities of these solar heaters, Sarah traveled back to Cairo as a Fulbright Scholar. The more she learned, the more fascinated she became. The Arab world is on the globe's Sun Belt, making it ideal for solar technology use. Despite this, little is being done to take advantage of renewable energy resources in Egypt.



While the original heaters which caught Sarah's attention were innovative and successful, they were part of a project which aimed to install only a limited number of heaters for residents. The project was not expanded beyond this; heaters that fell into disrepair remained inoperative and neighbors interested in the heaters had no way of obtaining one. Sarah has determined to expand on this project, to tap more fully into the potential of solar power in Egypt and help improve facilities for underprivileged communities. She is leading a multi-phase project on water heaters aimed at promoting the development and use of solar technologies in Egypt.

Sarah's project consists of three phases, with an end goal of creating small businesses for the construction, installation and maintenance of solar water heaters. The first phase of the project consists of awareness sessions, which aim to educate communities about the potential for solar water heaters, hoping to make people interested in investing in the technology. The second phase of the project involves workshops, to train a select number of community members to construct, install and repair water heaters. The small business created in phase three of the project will employ those trained in the second phase of the project and will be operated by the community members. In time, Sarah hopes other communities will see the benefits of these water heaters and the business model, and be able to follow the example of her first starter community.

### Connect:



[@SarahSMousa](https://twitter.com/SarahSMousa)



# Yad Faeq



*Know Funding*



In 2011, Yad Faeq won second place in his local Iraqi Microsoft Imagine Cup. In 2012, his team of three won the 2012 competition, and so presented at the global Sydney competition. His initiative on traffic jams in Iraq had everything they should have needed. And yet the startup failed.

There is a disconnect between businesspersons, funders, and technology enthusiasts in Iraq. As a result of this disconnect, there is little Iraqi investment in technologies, and thus little motivation to work in the arena. A

mentality of “no funding” impedes technical advancement in the local economy.

Yad hopes to help transform this “no fund” mentality to a “know fund” culture, helping bridge the entrepreneurial, funding, and technical sectors of Iraq. “Know Fund” is a crowdfunding platform focused on helping young innovators in the Iraqi community. Through accessible video pitches, young entrepreneurs can better reach potential funders. “Know Fund” will move beyond filling the contact gap between young innovators and investors in Iraq, mentoring startups about where to direct their projects, clarifying business plans, and providing feedback on initial design and test products.

“Know Fund” seeks to create the motivation to innovate technologies and invest in growth, creating a community and introducing a spirit of entrepreneurship to the technical sector.

Yad reminds young entrepreneurs and startups feeling disheartened by difficulties, missteps, or failures of this anonymous quotation: “When you feel like giving up, remember why you held on for so long in the first place.”

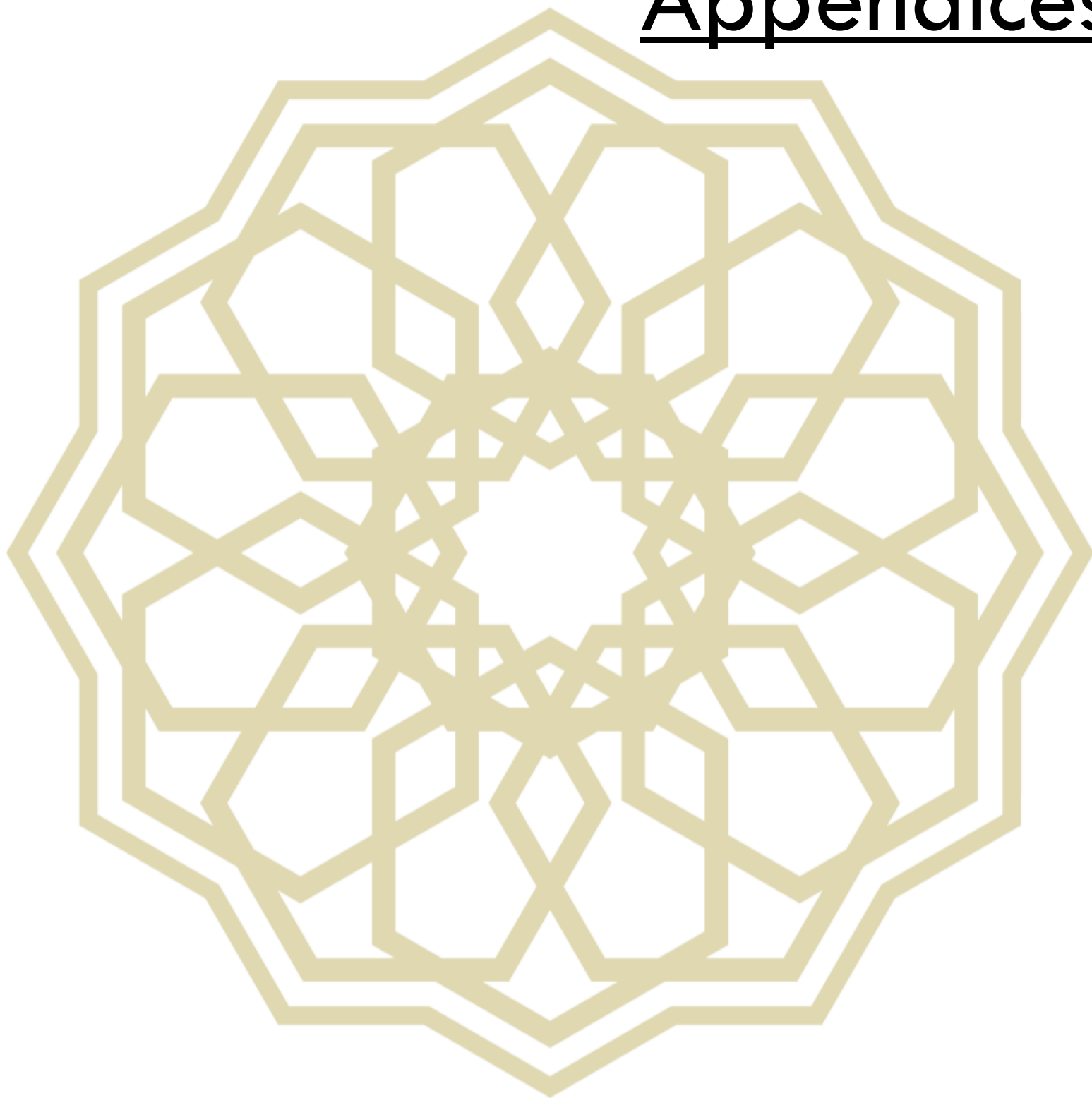
### **Connect:**

Online: [knowfund.com](http://knowfund.com)





# Appendices







### **2013 AMENDS Delegates:**

- Dari AlHuwait, *Kuwait*
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